NATION

Air severe for 4th day in Delhi, Haryana suffers too

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Gold prices dip 6% amid stronger dollar & US inflation

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Cleveland native Jake Paul beats 58-year-old Tyson

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

روزنامہ ساحل بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 17 NOVEMBER 2024 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 14 JUMADA I, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 291 | Pages: 8

WE ARE HIRING

REPORTERS
WEB-EDITOR
SUB-EDITOR

Journalism degree preferred but not essential.

Reporter: 5-6 years experience.

Web-editor: 2-4 years experience.

Sub editors: Freshers welcome.

SEND YOUR CV TO:

hr.salarnews@gmail.com
anushreeirwin@gmail.com

Curfew, net ban as Manipur erupts over hostage deaths

Protesters target houses of Ministers, MLAs in Imphal

IMPHAL, 16 NOV

Protesters targeted the residences of three Manipur Ministers and six BJP MLAs on Saturday as part of their demonstrations across districts prompting the government to impose curfew in Imphal valley and suspend internet services in seven districts, officials said.

The protest were held after police found six bodies five days after three women and three children, including an eight-month-old, from the Meitei community were taken hostage by suspected insurgents from Jiribam. They ransacked the houses of three of six legislators and set their properties on fire, while security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse protesters in different parts of Imphal.

Manipur government, in a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs Saturday, requested the withdrawal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, from areas under the jurisdiction of six police stations in the state.

The mob vandalised the BJP MLA's house and set ablaze the properties of the legislator, a senior police officer said **PHOTO: X**

Agitators in Sagolband area in Imphal West district gathered in front of the residence of BJP MLA RK Imo, who is also the son-in-law of Chief Minister N Biren Singh, and raised slogans demanding an "appropriate response from the government" and urging the authorities to "arrest the culprits within 24 hours". Protesters, who had come to meet Keishamthong's independent legislator Sapam Nishikanta Singh at his residence in Tiddim Road in Imphal West, targeted the office building of a]newspaper owned by him after they were informed that the legislator was not present in the state. At Keisampat Bridge, tear gas shells were fired to disperse protesters who were attempting to march towards several buildings, including Raj Bhavan, and the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the police said. Meanwhile, suspected militants engaged in a brief exchange of fire with security forces in Irengbam Maning area in Bishnupur district, police said. The bodies of the 10 Kuki-Zo youths killed in a gunfight with security personnel in Jiribam were on Saturday airlifted to Churachandpur from Assam's Silchar town, where the autopsies were conducted. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

'EXPIRED FIRE EXTINGUISHERS'

Charred ward of the Neonatal ICU after a fire at the Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College, in UP's Jhansi on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

10 babies killed in UP hospital fire

LUCKNOW, 16 NOV

The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday formed a four-member committee for a three-tier probe into the fire at the children's ward of Maharani Laxmibai Medical College in Jhansi that snuffed out the lives of 10 newborns as officials suspect electrical short circuit to be the cause of the tragic incident.

The conflagration occurred around 10.45pm on Friday, presumably due to an electrical short circuit, with preliminary reports indicating that the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) was engulfed in flames.

Meanwhile, 16 others newborns injured battled for life on Saturday.

Authorities confirmed that post-mortem examinations were conducted on seven infants, while three remained unidentified. Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak rebutted media claims regarding expired fire extinguishers at the facility, asserting that all firefighting equipment was operational and a safety audit had been performed only this February.

In the wake of this disaster, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences, announcing financial assistance of Rs. 2,00,000 for the families of the deceased, alongside an ex-gratia payment of Rs 5,00,000 from the Uttar Pradesh government.

Families of the victims gathered outside the ward, mourning their losses as officials worked to account for the other infants; 54 were rescued and relocated to safety within 15 to 20 minutes of the fire breaking out. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered urgent investigations, with reports mandated from the Jhansi Divisional Commissioner and local police. He reiterated his distress over the incident, committing to support the bereaved families during this tragic time.

The incident has ignited a political row, with opposition parties targeting the ruling BJP for negligence. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav called for thorough investigations and greater accountability, urging the Chief Minister to focus on improving healthcare facilities rather than the upcoming election campaign.

Further, Uttar Pradesh government has formed a four-member committee to determine the root cause of the fire and assess any negligence, with a report expected within seven days. The committee will be chaired by the Director General of Medical Education and Training, alongside other healthcare and fire service officials. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

EC raps Kharge, Nadda over poll code violation complaints

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

In a significant development ahead of the Assembly elections in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, the Election Commission (EC) has sought the comments from the presidents of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress regarding allegations of poll code violations made against their respective leaders.

On Saturday, the EC sent separate letters to BJP president JP Nadda and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, asking them to respond to the complaints filed by the opposing party. The commission has set a deadline for formal responses from both leaders by 1pm on Monday, 18 November, while reminding them of its earlier advisories to their parties regarding adherence to public decorum and the model code of conduct during campaigning.

JP Nadda and Mallikarjun Kharge **PHOTO: AGENCIES**

During the ongoing elections, top leaders from both parties have been actively campaigning in the two states. The EC has previously dealt with complaints exchanged between the BJP and Congress during the Lok Sabha elections involving prominent figures, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. In its complaint, the Congress has accused Modi of making "false, malicious, and slanderous statements" at rallies in Maharashtra's Nasik and Dhule on November 8, where he allegedly targeted the Indian National Congress and its historical leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. Additionally, the Congress has alleged that Home Minister Amit Shah made divisive remarks in Jharkhand's Dhanbad on 12 November, suggesting the INC was against Scheduled Castes. *—PTI*

City school secy held for sexually harassing girl

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

A school secretary has been arrested on charges of sexually harassing a Class 10 student at the private school in Nelamangala.

The accused, V Iraiah, 50, was arrested on Saturday under sections of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (Pocso), 2012, and was remanded in judicial custody of Bengaluru Central Prison.

Police said the girl had informed her parents that the accused had been sexually harassing her for the last five months. The girl said the accused would call her to his chamber, touch her inappropriately. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

ISRO joins hands with SpaceX to launch satellite

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch its GSAT-20 communication satellite using the Falcon 9 rocket of SpaceX, the rocket-making company owned by billionaire Elon Musk in the United States. This will be ISRO's first commercial launch using SpaceX and will cost an estimated $60-70 million. The development comes as Musk set is to play a key role under the administration of US President-elect Donald Trump. Musk is currently lobbying for the Starlink satellite internet service run by SpaceX to be approved for use in India. The country has also signed a separate seal with the US-based company to send an Indian astronaut to the International Space Station. The satellite named GSAT-N2 or GSAT-20 will provide in-flight internet services in India and will be launched from Cape Canaveral in the US. ***—Agencies***

NCB seizes 82.53 kg cocaine in Delhi's major drug bust

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has successfully recovered 82.53 kg of high-grade cocaine from the Janakpuri and Nangloi area of Delhi, marking a significant breakthrough against drug trafficking syndicates operating in India, particularly in the Delhi NCR Region. The NCB's efforts were based on leads from previous seizures in March and August 2024. The initial recovery was from a parcel destined for Australia, but the bulk quantity was concealed at Janakpuri and Nangloi, Delhi. The NCB has arrested four people so far, and further investigations are underway with the help of foreign Drug Law Enforcement Agencies. The syndicate is operated by a group of people based abroad, and some of the seized contraband was sent to Australia through courier/small cargo services. The main suspects are mainly 'Hawala Operators' who use pseudo-names for drug dealing conversations. ***—Agencies***

DA case: Lokayukta summons Zameer

MANGULURU, 16 NOV

Karnataka Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan has confirmed that the Lokayukta police have issued a notice for him to appear on December 3, as part of an investigation into allegations of disproportionate assets against him. In a statement, Khan described the notice as 'routine', asserting that there is nothing new to report regarding the case.

The investigation originated when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches linked to Khan in relation to the IMA Ponzi scam back in August 2021. Following these searches, the ED passed relevant materials to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) for further inquiry.

With the ACB subsequently rendered defunct, the matter was transferred to the Lokayukta, which continued investigation.

The Lokayukta sources on the other hand, confirmed the issuance of the notice, underscoring the ongoing scrutiny of Khan's financial dealings. *—PTI*

PM leaves for 3-nation tour, to attend G20

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his eagerness for "meaningful" discussions at the forthcoming G20 summit in Brazil, set for 18-19 November. Before embarking on a five-day trip to Nigeria, Brazil, and Guyana, Modi noted that the summit would build upon the successes of India's G20 presidency last year, which prioritised the Global South.

As a member of the G20 alongside Brazil and South Africa, Modi will engage with global leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden. "Brazil has built upon India's legacy," he stated, emphasising the aim of fostering cooperation under the theme of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Modi's journey begins in Nigeria, where he will meet with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This two-day visit, his first to Nigeria, seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships founded on democratic principles and shared values. Modi expressed enthusiasm for connecting with the Indian community during his stay.

Concluding his tour in Guyana, Modi will make history as the first Indian prime minister to visit the nation in over 50 years.

He plans to discuss enhancing relationships rooted in shared heritage and culture, as well as participating in the second India-CARICOM Summit to bolster ties with Caribbean nations.

In a message on X, Modi highlighted the significance of these meetings, stating, "I will take part in a wide range of programmes... which will add momentum to India's ties with various nations." *—PTI*

WITH CRICKET BAT

Man kills son for pestering him to get his phone repaired

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

An argument a 14-year-old boy had with his father to persuade him to get his mobile phone repaired ended in his death in Yelachenahalli, police said here on Saturday.

The accused, Ravi Kumar, works as a carpenter while his wife, Shashikala, is a homemaker. The victim, Tejas, was studying in Class 9 while his elder brother was in Class 10.

Kumar assaulted him with a cricket bat and held him by neck and banged his head on the wall several times and only after he lost complete consciousness, they took him to the hospital where he was declared brought dead on Friday.

PHOTO: X

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Lokesh B Jagalasar said there was a lot of dissatisfaction and clashes between the child and his parents over excessive use of mobile phone. Also, the parents were unhappy about him not attending school regularly and for associating with a "bad group of friends".

The immediate cause for the assault, however, was about the mobile phone. Since his phone was not working, he has been requesting his parents to get it repaired.

"The assault has caused the death of the child and it was not a simple assault. Multiple injuries were found on the back of the child and head. The father who assaulted the child has been arrested," he said.

Following the incident, Kumar attempted to hush up the matter and was about to carry the last rites of the boy, police said. He had lied to his neighbours that his son died of illness. However, his wife went against him and alerted police about the incident.

—Salar News with Agencies

Actor Kasthuri arrested for remarks on Telugus

HYDERABAD, 16 NOV

Actor Kasthuri Shankar was on Saturday arrested in Hyderabad for her alleged offensive comments against Telugu-speaking people in Tamil Nadu.

The actor sparked widespread controversy a few days ago after she allegedly made objectionable remarks on Telugu community's lineage at a meeting of the Hindu Makkal Katchi.

Earlier, the Madras High Court dismissed the actor's anticipatory bail petition, saying that the actor's statement "hovers around hate speech."

The police searched for the actor in Chennai and Tamil Nadu after she had gone into hiding for the last few days. *—Agencies*

2 Belagavi women assaulted over 'prostitution' suspicion

BELAGAVI, 16 NOV

PHOTO: X

A 60-year-old woman and her daughter were allegedly assaulted, publicly humiliated, and had their clothes torn by neighbours who suspected them of engaging in 'prostitution', police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on 13 November in Waddarwadi area in Belagavi. Three individuals including a woman have been arrested in connection with the attack, according to the police.

In her complaint, the 29-year-old victim stated that the accused forcibly entered their home, alleging that frequent visits by men raised suspicions of illicit activities. The accused reportedly dragged the two women out by their hair, twisted their arms, kicked one of them in the waist, and beaten them.

The complainant further alleged that the assailants attempted to strip her 60-year-old mother by tearing her clothes and subjected both women to verbal abuse. The victims have been living here for around four years now. The 29-year-old woman also has a 13-year-old daughter. *—PTI*

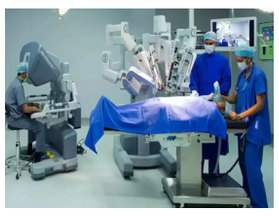


PHOTO: AGENCIES

Bharath Hospital launches robotic surgery treatment

MYSURU, 16 NOV

City-based Bharath Hospital and Institute of Oncology (BHIO) launched robotic surgery treatment on Saturday for the departments of oncology, gynaecology, urology and general surgery. BHIO has become the first healthcare facility in Mysuru to introduce da Vinci Surgical System, a revolutionary step in minimally invasive surgery - a robotic platform that helps surgeons perform minimally invasive surgeries with greater precision and control. Launching the new service facility, BHIO Chairman Dr BS Ajaikumar said: "This will transform not only clinical outcomes of oncology patients but also improve surgical results as well as overall quality of life." The Davinci system is designed to offer a range of benefits, including reduced pain, less blood loss, shorter hospital stays, and minimal postoperative complications. Robotic surgeon at BHIO Dr Raxith Sringeri said the state-of-the-art facility will position Mysuru as a hub for advanced robotic surgery.
—Salar News

2-day public policy fest to be held in Infosys Foundation

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) will host Neeti Habba, a two-day policy festival at the Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) on 22 and 23 November. In a press statement issued on Saturday, ISF announced that the central theme of Neeti Habba is "What is public in public policy?" The keynote address will be delivered by Uma Mahadevan, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner of the Government of Karnataka, who will discuss the journey from policy to action. The fest will also feature game-based workshops, hands-on activities, and audio-visual experiences. The two-day policy festival is open to the public.
—PTI

Poor food: Mysore University hostel inmates protest

MYSURU, 16 NOV

Hundreds of students staying in the women's hostels of University of Mysore protested in the Manasagangothri campus in the City on Saturday, alleging substandard food was being given to them. They accused management of serving breakfast infested with worms. They shouted slogans against the university administration for not sorting out the issue though they had held several protests in this regard. The registrar visited the spot and pacified the agitating students. Later, the protest was withdrawn after an assurance from the authorities that quality food would be served to students.
—Salar News

Will expose BJP on Waqf land issue: Shivakumar

BJP will protest against notices from 25 Nov to 25 Dec

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday said his party would expose the BJP on the Waqf issue as changes in revenue records favouring the Waqf Board were effected only during the Saffron party's regime.

While BJP is all set to mount pressure on the Congress government by holding a mega protest and a month-long march on the Waqf issue, Shivakumar claimed that during its tenure, the BJP regime started changing the revenue records of rights, tenancy and crops in favour of the Waqf Board and many properties also were transferred in the name of that board.

The BJP's opposition on the matter was "foolishness" as the government had all the related documents to pin them down, the Deputy CM said. "We will expose them," he asserted and added that they came to know such aspects only later. Also, the issue did not get into public domain as everyone was busy with the recent elections.

From 25 November to 25 December, BJP will be on protest mode against 'Waqf notices' to farmers, individuals and institutions.

After the Waqf controversy started raging in the state, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced withdrawing all the notices served to farmers, individuals and institutions.

The two factions of the BJP, led by its State Chief BY Vijayendra and the other by Vijayapura MLA, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal have decided to take on the Congress government on the Waqf issue separately. Vijayendra has planned a mega agitation at Belagavi during the winter session of the legislature and the Yatnal faction would take out a month long march from Bidar in north Karnataka to Chamarajanagar in the south.

BJP copied Congress' schemes

Shivakumar said BJP replicated Congress' welfare schemes in Maharashtra due to inflation concerns.

'Will mend Zameer's ways'

Terming Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan's comments on Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy wrong, Shivakumar said he would try to mend his ways. "The exchange of statements between them is their internal matter. But Zameer must not have used the word Kaaliya and spoken about his wealth. We have communicated this to him internally and he has already apologised," he said.
—Salar News with Agencies

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at a meeting in support of Congress candidate for Chandivali seat Arif Naseem Khan ahead of Maharashtra Assembly elections, in Mumbai on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

MVA will form govt in Maha: DKS

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Deputy Chief Minister and Congress leader DK Shivakumar on Saturday said Maha Vikas Aghadi will win 165 to 170 seats and form the next government in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra Assembly has a total of 288 seats. "They (BJP) have confused people by alleging that we have not implemented our guarantees. But we have held a press conference and assured people; now the voters know that we have implemented all the guarantees," Shivakumar said.

The KPCC President said Karnataka's model of governance, which includes measures to combat inflation, is being followed across the country. "I am happy that at least now they have realised that inflation is affecting the common people of the country," he claimed.

On Waqf land issue, Shivakumar said Congress government is not taking land from any farmer. "We have all the records that it started during the BJP's time. But my Chief Minister and my ministers have already made it clear that land of any farmer will not be taken," he said.

Maharashtra Assembly elections will be held on 20 November, with the counting on 23 November. *—ANI*

BLACKMAILING CHARGE

KPCC spokesperson files complaint against MUDA complainant

MYSURU, 16 NOV

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee spokesperson M Lakshmana has filed another complaint with Lakshmipuram police against MUDA complainant and RTI activist Sneyamahi Krishna. Lakshmana demanded police arrest Krishna on charges of blackmailing and releasing fake documents of stamp duty paid by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife BM Parvathi on social media.

The Congress leader also sought police to banish Krishna from the district as he is a rowdy-sheeter. More than 44 cases have been filed against Krishna across police stations in State, he alleged.

The Congress leader was accompanied by District Congress President BJ Vijayakumar, City Congress President R Murthy, BM Ramu and others while filing the complaint. They warned of staging a dharna in front of Lakshmipuram police station at 10am on Sunday if they did not initiate action against Krishna.

Lakshmana said two people, identifying as friends of Krishna, met him two months ago and sought money from him to hush up the MUDA case. "Three days ago, these two people contacted me again and threatened to release documents against me if I continued to file a case against Krishna," he alleged.
—Salar News

M Lakshmana **PHOTO: FB**

Ex-CM M Veerappa Moily, Azim Premji University prof A Narayan, DIPR Commissioner Hemanth Nimbalkar, Media Academy Chairperson Ayesha Khanum at Press Day event, in Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Press is the voice of voiceless, says Moily

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

In an era of rising intolerance, the courage of journalists remains democracy's last line of defence, former chief minister M Veerappa Moily said on Saturday.

Speaking at National Press Day event organised at the auditorium of Department of Information and Public Relations here, Moily emphasised the significant role of the press in society, noting that the perception of media has evolved over time.

About print media, the Congress leader said, "Newspapers are not just a mirror to our times. They are the conscience of the nation, the voice of the voiceless, and the keeper of democracy. It is through the diligent work of journalists that truths are unearthed, power is held to account, and citizens are informed."

Hemanth M Nimbalkar, Commissioner, DIPR, said the Press can save itself from being controlled by the governments. He explained how the Right to Information (RTI) Act, one of the most significant tools for ensuring transparency and accountability, has been weakened due to various factors in recent years.

Karnataka Media Academy Chairperson Ayesha Khanum said journalism is a huge responsibility and not an easy task. "The media is the fourth pillar of democracy, playing a crucial role in shaping public opinion, driving development, and holding power accountable."
—Salar News

CRIME SHEET

MAN GETS 5-YR JAIL FOR SMUGGLING SANDALWOOD

MYSURU, 16 NOV

A man was given five-year imprisonment and a penalty of Rs 50,000 for cutting and smuggling 20kg of sandalwood logs in Hanur taluk in Mysuru district.

The convict, Ravinaika bin Ramunaika, along with his two accomplices was caught red-handed by Forest Department officials while selling sandalwood logs near Lokkanahalli on 4 November. The department officials filed a complaint and Hanur Town Police registered a case.

Hanur Circle Inspector Mohit Sahadeva submitted a chargesheet before the court. Additional District Sessions Court Judge, Kollegal division, awarded the five-year imprisonment and the penalty. *—Salar News*

ROWDY-SHEETER HELD UNDER GOONDA ACT

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

A rowdy-sheeter allegedly involved in at least 15 criminal cases such as murder, attempt-to-murder and abduction was arrested under Goonda Act by City police on Saturday.

Mohammad Shahbaz, a resident of Sarvagnanagar, had a rowdy sheet opened against him at Govindarajnagar police station in the City. In 2017, police arrested him and detected his involvement in at least six serious offences. After the accused was granted conditional bail in 2018, he went absconding and failed to appear before the court following which a Non-Bailable Warrant was issued against him, police told Salar News. Govindarajnagar police and Deputy Commissioner of Police, East, sought permission from City Police Commissioner B Dayananda and arrested him under Goonda Act.
—Salar News

MAN CAUGHT PEDDLING 12.2KG OF GANJA

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

A man was caught red-handed while selling ganja near Banappa Park Road here on Saturday.

The accused is Praveen Kumar, a resident of Koramangala. A police patrol team had received information that a man was allegedly carrying drugs on his bike, a senior official from Halasuru Gate police told Salar News. Police examined him and seized 12.2kg of ganja, a mobile phone and Rs 1,600 in cash along with a two-wheeler from the accused.

The accused was waiting for his prospective customer to deliver the drugs, the official said. "We are interrogating him for further information on how he got the drugs and his modus operandi," he added. *—Salar News*

MAN FINED RS 27,000 FOR GIVING BIKE TO HIS MINOR SON

MYSURU, 16 NOV

A man was imposed a penalty of Rs 27,000 for giving a bike to his minor son to ride in T Narasipur town. Judicial Magistrate of First Class Court in T Narasipur town also ordered Regional Transport Authority not to issue a driving licence to his minor son until he completes 25 years and suspended the RC book of the bike owner for one year.

On 13 March, 2024, T Narasipur town police Sub Inspector Jagadeesh Dhoolashetty caught Akash, son of Triveninagar resident Mahesh, riding a two-wheeler during routine vehicle checking. During the investigation, the officer also found the vehicle insurance had expired. The police officer filed a chargesheet before the court. Delivering the judgement, the court warned parents of giving their vehicles to their juveniles. *—Salar News*

CM TO OPEN BENGALURU TECH SUMMIT

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will inaugurate 27th Bengaluru Tech Summit (BTS) here on Tuesday, officials said on Saturday.

The three-day tech conclave is organised by Department of Electronics, IT and BT of Karnataka government. Australia is the official country partner for the event.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and international dignitaries will take part in the inaugural ceremony, where two MoUs with Switzerland and Finland and a Letter of Intent with Sharjah Innovation Authority (UAE) to foster deeper global collaboration will be signed, officials said.

Information Technology Minister Priyank Kharge said, "This year, Bengaluru Tech Summit takes on the theme of being unbound, embracing the spirit of breaking boundaries and redefining what's possible. For the first time, we will be having a huge delegation of over 15 countries from both governmental and private delegations along with our 33 global innovation alliance countries as well." Also, for the first time, the government is connecting startups directly to Venture Capitalists live. *—PTI*

BOOST TO INNOVATIONS

Krishimela 2024 scripts a roaring success despite rain

The theme of this year's event, 'Climate Smart Digital Agriculture', focused on sustainable, innovative practices to tackle climate challenges **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Even the rains could not deter the hordes of people flocking to Krishimela 2024 inside the sprawling 1,320-acre campus of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) in Bengaluru, popularly known as the GKVK Campus, late on Friday evening.

The outgoing crowd, clutching an assortment of saplings and other goodies, only spurred the incoming visitors to quicken their pace. They were eager to catch the annual celebration of all things agriculture, organised by UAS since 1966.

With the mela running until 17 November, the Bengaluru Traffic Police has already issued an advisory anticipating larger crowds over the weekend.

The theme of this year's event, 'Climate Smart Digital Agriculture', focused on sustainable, innovative practices to tackle climate challenges. The mela underscored the role of agricultural universities in sparking interest on farming in youth, and driving economic growth in the sector.

- With the mela running until Sunday, Bengaluru Traffic Police has issued an advisory anticipating larger crowds over the weekend

"About 2 lakh people are expected to visit on Saturday and Sunday. So, there will be slow-moving traffic between Byatarayanapura junction and the Jakkur stretch. Plan your journey accordingly," stated the police advisory released on 15 November.

On Friday, visitors thronged nearly 700 stalls showcasing innovations aimed at reducing farmers' workloads, such as drones and cultivators.

While most stalls catered to large-scale farmers, the fair also featured crowd favourites like massage devices and innovative kitchen gadgets.

For many, attending Krishimela feels like "visiting a village fair." However, for 36-year-old YC Shantamma from Kagallahalli in Ramanagara, this year's fair was life-changing.

"I won the State-level Young Best Farm Woman award. It's an honour I can flaunt in my village for years," said a beaming Shantamma. The award, she added, serves as inspiration for further innovation. *—PTI*

Yediyurappa hits out at Cong govt over Covid probe

BENGALURU, 16 NOV

Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Saturday alleged that the Congress government has ordered a probe into the Covid-19 management with malafide intention since BJP was in power at that time.

State government has decided to set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate alleged irregularities in Covid-19 management based on the recommendation of Justice John Michael D'Cunha Commission report, which favoured the prosecution of Yediyurappa and the then Health Minister B Sriramulu.

When medicines were not available and survival was a question before people during the pandemic, the BJP government made a sincere effort to save lives, he said. *—PTI*

Mumbai constable booked for sharing ballot photo

MUMBAI, 16 NOV

A case has been registered against a police constable after he allegedly uploaded a photograph of his postal ballot paper on social media after exercising his franchise in the Maharashtra assembly polls, an official said on Saturday. Constable Ganesh Shinde voted on a postal ballot for the Ashti assembly constituency in Beed district, said Balasaheb Wakchaure, returning officer of Malabar Hill seat in south Mumbai. He said the constable allegedly clicked a photograph of the ballot paper from a polling booth at a facilitation centre and uploaded it on social media. A case has been registered against Shinde at Gaodevi police station. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Andhra CM Naidu's brother dies at 72

HYDERABAD, 16 NOV

Former TDP MLA and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's younger brother N Ramamurthy Naidu passed away at a private super-speciality hospital here on Saturday, while undergoing treatment for health complications, the hospital said. He was 72. Ramamurthy Naidu, who was admitted to the hospital on 14 November following a cardiac arrest, breathed his last at 12.45 PM, the hospital said in a bulletin. Ramamurthy Naidu was suffering from "non-communicating normal pressure hydrocephalus (buildup of fluid in brain), post VP shunt", it said. He was receiving intermittent ventilatory support in the past for respiratory distress. Ramamurthy Naidu represented Chandragiri assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh from 1994-99. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy condoled the demise of Ramamurthy Naidu and prayed for the departed soul. *—PTI*

Anurag appointed as India's envoy to Mauritius

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Seasoned diplomat Anurag Srivastava has been appointed as India's next high commissioner to Mauritius -- an island nation that has emerged as a strategic player in the Indian Ocean region. Srivastava, a 1999-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) diplomat, is currently serving as a joint secretary helming the Nepal-Bhutan division at the headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). He will succeed incumbent K Nandini Singla. Srivastava is expected to take up the assignment shortly, the MEA said in a brief statement on Saturday. Srivastava also served as India's ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union from September 2016 to February 2020. *—PTI*

Police nab driver over attack on TMC councillor

KOLKATA, 16 NOV

Kolkata Police on Saturday arrested one taxi driver in connection with the attack on TMC councillor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation Sushanta Ghosh, taking the total number of arrests to two, a senior officer said. The arrest took place after the taxi driver's name surfaced during the grilling of Yuvraj Singh, who tried to fire at Ghosh in the southern part of the city's Kasba area from close range on Friday evening, he said. Primary investigation revealed that the arrested taxi driver, Ahmed, had driven Singh and his associate Iqbal on Thursday night from Howrah station to the city's Port area where they stayed. Ghosh, the KMC councillor of ward number 108, had a close shave on Friday evening when two persons tried to fire at him from a close range. *—PTI*

Shah: Soren will give quota to Muslims

Shah says RaGa makes promises, flees abroad

DUMKA, 16 NOV

Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday attacked Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren saying he is "conspiring to provide reservations to Muslims through backdoor channels with the help of Congress" and warned that BJP would thwart any such attempt.

He also held Soren "responsible" for the declining tribal population.

"Hemant Soren is trying to provide reservations to Muslims through backdoor with the support from Congress. I warn that BJP will not allow any such plans of Hemant Soren and Rahul Gandhi to succeed," Shah said addressing a rally at Jharkhand's Dumka.

He alleged that the Jharkhand government is patronising infiltration for vote bank and said "Hemant Soren is responsible for declining tribal population as he is allowing infiltrators to enter Jharkhand and marry tribal women. They are snatching tribal land here which will not be allowed."

Shah said former PM Manmohan Singh gave Rs 84,000 crore to Jharkhand in 10 years, whereas PM Modi gave Rs 3.90 lakh crore to the state. Shah promised that BJP after being voted to power will set up so many industries so that not a single youth would be required to migrate to other places in search of livelihood.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a public meeting ahead of the second phase of the Jharkhand Assembly elections **PHOTO: PTI**

> **Rahul Gandhi is anti-poor. He doesn't want the people of Dharavi to get homes. Rajiv Gandhi had made an announcement for Dharavi, and these people were in power for 25 years after that, but no work was done**
>
> -Devendra Fadnavis, Maharashtra DyCM

He the BJP government will ensure rehabilitation plans first before displacing people for projects.

He claimed that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime, Jharkhand was freed from Naxalism and whatever is remaining will be eradicated by March 2025.

Taking potshots at the Congress, Shah claimed that the party's leader Rahul Gandhi believes in flying abroad after making promises, while it is only BJP that fulfils what its guarantees.

"Rahul baba makes promises one after another, but after making promises he flies abroad... But on the other hand, PM Modi's promise is like one etched on stone (patthar ki lakeer). He fulfils what he promises. BJP fulfils its guarantees and only we can shape Jharkhand. The Congress, JMM and RJD can never work in the interest of state," he said. *—PTI*

Rahul: Constitution blank book for BJP

Priyanka accuses Modi, Shah of telling lies

AMRAVATI/CHIMUR, 16 NOV

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said his party considers the Constitution to be the country's DNA, but for the ruling BJP and the RSS it is a "blank book".

Speaking at a campaign rally in eastern Maharashtra's Amravati ahead of the November 20 assembly elections, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said nowhere in the Constitution it is written that state governments can be toppled by "purchasing MLAs" as it happened in Maharashtra, and "Rs 16 lakh crore debt" of top businessmen can be waived.

"Congress considers the Constitution as the country's DNA, while for the ruling BJP and the RSS it is a blank book," he alleged.

His retort came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party claimed that the Congress leader was showing a copy of the Constitution with blank pages inside at his campaign rallies.

"My sister told me that these days prime minister Narendra Modi was speaking about the same issue that I have been raising. I told him in the Lok Sabha that a caste census should be conducted and the 50 per cent cap on reservations should be removed. Now he is saying in his election rallies that I am against reservation. He is suffering from memory loss like a former US president," Gandhi further said.

The PM will next say Rahul Gandhi is against caste census, he said.

Speaking at another rally at Chimur in Chandrapur district later, he accused PM Modi of promoting the lie that Rahul Gandhi was against the Constitution and reservations.

PM, Shah spreading lies that Rahul is against reservation, alleges Priyanka

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union minister Amit Shah of spreading lies about her brother Rahul Gandhi that he is against reservation.

She said these leaders are scared of Rahul Gandhi because he wants a caste census to be conducted country.

Addressing a poll rally in the temple town of Shirdi in Ahilyanagar district of Maharashtra, she said projects worth Rs 10 lakh crore were snatched away from Maharashtra. *—PTI*

LoP in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a public meeting ahead of Maharashtra Assembly elections **PHOTO: PTI**

> **Defeat those who spoiled cultured politics of Maharashtra by breaking parties**
>
> -Sharad Pawar, NCP (SP) chief

RESERVED FOR PM: KHARGE CLAIMS NOT ALLOWED INTO AIRPORT LOUNGE

RANCHI, 16 NOV

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, accusing them of delaying helicopters of his and Rahul Gandhi in Jharkhand, and alleged that despite holding cabinet minister rank, the opposition leaders were not given access to reserved airport lounge.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's helicopter, which was supposed to take him from Mahagama in Jharkhand's Godda district after he addressed an election rally there, was grounded for about two hours on Friday, prompting allegations from the Congress that the delay was politically motivated.

"Yesterday, our leader Rahul's helicopter was deliberately delayed by two hours as the PM was sitting in his plane. Today, my chopper was delayed by 20 minutes as Union Home Minister Amit Shah was landing. His path was separate and mine was separate.

Kharge launched a fresh attack on Modi, accusing him of "eliminating freedom of speech" and imprisoning those who speak out against him *—PTI*

Poll authorities on Saturday checked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's bag at Dhamangaon Railway in Maharashtra's Amravati. At the same time, videos on social media also showed bags of BJP leaders Amit Shah, Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar being checked by the poll authorities too. **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

PRATIBHA KAKI DIDN'T CAMPAIGN IN PAST, HOW IS SHE DOING IT NOW: AJIT

BARAMATI, 16 NOV

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who is locked in an electoral battle against his nephew Yugendra Pawar in Baramati, on Saturday said his aunt Pratibha Pawar never campaigned in the past but is doing so for his rival now. Addressing a rally here, Ajit Pawar, the head of the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), sought to know his aunt's "sudden affinity" towards her grandnephew Yugendra, who has been fielded by her husband Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP) from the family's home turf. Sharad Pawar's wife Pratibha, who generally keeps away from politics, and Supriya Sule's daughter Revati are also canvassing for Yugendra, who is the son of Ajit Pawar's brother. *—PTI*

Ajit Pawar **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP seeks EC, SC action on Muslim bodies' vote appeal

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

BJP on Saturday alleged that some Muslim bodies are trying to vitiate the poll atmosphere in Maharashtra and Jharkhand by appealing to their community members to vote for the INDIA bloc on the lines of religion, and urged the Election Commission and the Supreme Court to take action in the matter.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said All India Muslim Personal Law Board's functionary Maulana Sajjad Nomani has said that the outfit has decided to support Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on 269 seats and other non-BJP parties on a few seats in Maharashtra Assembly polls.

Gaurav Bhatia **PHOTO: FP**

He said that Nomani has appealed to the Muslims to vote for the MVA, saying the outcome of the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly elections will have an impact not only on the future of the state but also on the future of the entire country.

Earlier the Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind's Lohardaga unit appealed to the Muslims to vote en bloc for the Congress-JMM-RJD-CPI (ML) Liberation combine in Jharkhand, Bhatia said. *— PTI*

MANIPUR BURNS

Take 'all necessary steps' to restore order: Centre to security

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

All security forces deployed in Manipur have been directed to take necessary steps to restore order and peace in the state as the security scenario remained "fragile" in the past few days, the Union Home Ministry said Saturday.

A fresh cycle of violence erupted in Manipur last Monday after 11 suspected militants, who allegedly attacked a police station and adjoining CRPF camp with sophisticated weapons in Manipur's Jiribam district, were killed in an exchange of fire.

A day later, six civilians, including women and children were abducted by armed militants from the same district.

"The security scenario in Manipur has remained fragile for the past few days. Armed miscreants from both communities in conflict have been indulging in violence leading to unfortunate loss of lives and disruption in public order," the ministry said on Saturday.

The Home Ministry said strict action would be initiated against anyone trying to indulge in violent and disruptive activities. It said important cases have been handed over to the NIA for effective investigation.

The Union Home Ministry requested the people to maintain peace, not believe in rumours and cooperate with the security forces to maintain law and order in the state.

Seeing the fragile situation, the Centre reimposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Manipur's six police station areas. The fresh order came after the Manipur government imposed AFSPA in the entire state on 1 October, barring 19 police station areas that include these six. *—PTI*

> **Modi is off on his periodic foreign jaunt, where he will attempt to score domestic political points rather than engage in any pretence of statesmanship. But why is Modi steadfastly refusing to visit troubled state of Manipur**
>
> -Congress

'De-escalation crucial after disengagement'

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

The disengagement part of the "problem" with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh has been put at rest and the focus should now be on de-escalation, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

Jaishankar said it is "reasonable" to expect some improvement in the relations between India and China following the final round of disengagement but hesitated to say that there could be a reset of the ties.

"I see disengagement as disengagement; nothing more, nothing less. If you look at our current situation with China, we have an issue where our troops are uncomfortably close along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) which required us to disengage," he said at the HT Leadership Summit. *—PTI*

AMID PARTY SETBACKS

Sukhbir Singh resigns as SAD chief

CHANDIGARH, 16 NOV

Sukhbir Singh Badal, who had been declared 'tankhaiya' (guilty of religious misconduct) by the Akal Takht, tendered his resignation on Saturday as the Shiromani Akali Dal president, a position he held since 2008.

Badal's resignation paves the way for the election of the new party chief.

The resignation of Badal, 62, who is the son of five-time Punjab chief minister late Parkash Singh Badal, came amid vociferous demand by several rebel party leaders including former MP Prem Singh Chandumajra, former SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur who wanted him to step down for the party's consistent dismal performance in the state assembly as well as parliamentary elections.

Badal, the former deputy chief minister, was the youngest chief of SAD, when he was elevated to the post in 2008.

Badal's resignation came days after he urged the Akal Takht Jathedar to pronounce his punishment for religious misconduct charges, saying more than two months have passed since he was declared 'tankhaiya' (guilty of religious misconduct). *—PTI*

Badal's resignation came days after he urged the Akal Takht Jathedar to pronounce his punishment for religious misconduct charges **PHOTO: PTI**

Naidu calls for action on fertility rate dip in South

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Fertility rates in southern states have gone below the replacement rate, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Saturday and stressed on the need for "population management".

Speaking at the HT Leadership Summit, the chief minister said there is a need to talk about population management and it's going to be an asset for India in the years to come.

Naidu said he has been stressing that the silence on the subject should be broken and people should talk about population management.

"Now South India's aging problem has started. Our fertility rate is 1.6. Generally, to maintain population, 2.1 fertility rate has to be maintained," he said, adding the population growth rate is at the borderline at present in the southern states and soon the population will start decreasing.

"That means the aging problem is catching up in India. Now if you won't talk, then we will have a problem," he said.

"British people came to India in the name of business and conquered us. Now in the name of service, both public and corporate governance, we will rule globally," he added. *—PTI*

Clash in UP over vehicle collision, 2 cops injured

MAU, 16 NOV

A clash broke out between two groups over a collision between their vehicles, in Uttar Pradesh's Mau late Friday evening leaving several people including two police officers injured, officials said. According to Mau police, the clash was triggered by an accident that involved two bikes. "Two bikes had collided with each other. An altercation started following the collision. People on both sides sustained injuries. They were admitted to a hospital," Mau Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mahesh Singh Attri said. The police said that 2-3 vehicles were damaged in the stone pelting that followed the clash. "A few people pelted stones there as well. When they were removed from the spot, a few of them blocked roads. We spoke with people, they said that they are vacating the road. Further action will be taken as per the complaint. —*ANI*

Army Chief Gen Dwivedi to visit Nepal next week

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi is set to visit Nepal next week to strengthen the defence and strategic relationship between the two nations. The visit will mark another significant chapter in the evolving military diplomacy between the two nations, with the aim of strengthening ties and paving the way for continued collaboration on multiple fronts, including military exercises, training programs, and strategic discussions on regional security concerns. Dwivedi is expected to hold extensive talks with his Nepalese counterpart General Ashok Raj Sigdel and meet the top political leadership of the Himalayan nation. The visit is expected to focus on the ongoing defence modernisation in both militaries, with India supporting Nepal in its military modernisation by supplying various forms of military hardware —*PTI*

Assam: Kin of killed militants clash with cops

GUWAHATI , 16 NOV

Police resorted to lathi charge outside the Silchar Medical College Hospital (SMCH) on Saturday as family members of 10 militants killed in a gunfight with security personnel in Manipur's Jiribam district, clashed with the forces demanding that the bodies be handed over to them, officials said. Family members of the 10 militants killed in a gunfight with CRPF personnel on Monday, were camping outside the hospital and demanded that the bodies be handed over to them. Assam police officials tried to convince them that the bodies will be handed over to Manipur police and that they can take up the matter with them. The agitated family members refused to accept the proposal and attacked police personnel by pelting stones in which several persons were injured. —ANI

Woman's body found in suitcase on Delhi highway

HAPUR, 16 NOV

A woman's body was found stuffed inside a red suitcase abandoned along the Delhi-Lucknow Highway in Hapur district, Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. The suitcase, discovered by commuters on the service road, was unzipped by police to reveal the body of a woman, estimated to be 25-30 years old, bearing injury marks. The police arrived swiftly upon alerting them with forensic experts, cordoning off the area to begin investigations. According to ASP Vineet Bhatnagar preliminary examination suggests the woman died about a day before the discovery. Police are now reviewing CCTV footage in the area as the investigation continues to uncover reasons. —*Agencies*

Shocked parents in despair at Jhansi hosp

Parents outside the hospital wait for hours to receive their infants' charred bodies

JHANSI, 16 NOV

Yakum Mansuri was sleeping on the pavement outside the children's ward of the medical college in Jhansi on Friday night when a fire broke out in the neonatal intensive care unit. He broke in through a window and managed to rescue some newborns but not his two daughters.

Charred bodies of some babies were shown to him by the authorities for identification but to no avail. "I couldn't recognise them," said the grief-stricken father, still desperate to find his daughters.

The blaze at the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) that claimed the lives of 10 newborns, many of them born prematurely, has been doused but the air around is heavy with sorrow.

Parents, mostly young mothers, and their families who gathered outside the children's ward clung to one another, drawing strength in their darkest hour. The women's faces are hidden behind veils but their grief was palpable in their cries.

Santoshi, who gave birth just 11 days ago, sat on the ground sobbing with her face covered by her palms.

"I heard a noise and came running. But how could I save my child? There was no information, no one told us what was happening," she said in a voice shaking with grief, not ready to accept the loss of her child.

The fire broke out around 10.45 pm on Friday, possibly due to an electrical short circuit. As the rescue operation unfolded, many anxious parents and their families kept a silent vigil, struggling to comprehend the scale of the tragedy that had struck them.

As the rescue operation unfolded, many anxious parents kept a silent vigil, struggling to comprehend the scale of the tragedy **PHOTO: PTI**

> **UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath should leave the election campaign and false claims of 'everything being fine' and focus on the poor condition of health and medical facilities**
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party Chief

While 10 newborns died in the fire, 16 others remain critically injured.

Among the heartbroken parents is Sanjana, who had just given birth to her first child prematurely.

"My child was born after seven months and was admitted here. When the fire broke out, no one could save him. He died," the wailing mother told PTI Videos.

Nearby, Sonu stood frozen, his face a mask of grief. He lost his seven-month-old son in the fire.

"My son had been admitted to the NICU for over a month. When the fire broke out, we were not allowed to enter. They saved many children, but 10 were burned. One of them was my son," he said to PTI video, his voice cracking with pain.

Sonu's brother Parsuram said, "We sold everything we had and took loans to buy medicine. Despite all this, we couldn't save the baby." —*PTI*

Family members wait outside the emergency ward after a fire broke out in Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College, Jhansi, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

PLEA ON FREE PADS

SC: Centre must address menstrual hygiene in schools

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Supreme Court has asked the Centre to clarify the the aspects highlighted by the petitioner relating to ground situation on menstrual hygiene in schools before implementing the policy.

A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and Pankaj Mithal asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati look into the aspects highlighted by the petitioner, clarify the position by the next date of hearing and listed the matter for December 3.

The policy talks about the vision, the objections, the target the policy components the current programmes and in the last the rules and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

The ASG informed the Court that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare shall coordinate with the States/UTs for drawing up their respective action plans ensuring that all aspects of Menstrual Hygiene Policy are drawn up in a comprehensive manner.

The court was hearing a plea seeking to issue directions to governments to provide free sanitary pads to girls studying in Classes 6 to 12.

The petitioner said that serious difficulty is faced by adolescent females between the ages of 11 and 18 years coming from poor backgrounds. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SC rejects Vedanta's plea on copper plant closure in TN

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Supreme Court has dismissed a review plea filed by Vedanta group against the closure of its copper smelting plant in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi.

The top court had on 29 February dismissed Vedanta's plea for re-opening of its copper smelting plant in Thoothukudi, closed since May 2018 over pollution concerns, while underlining the importance of health and welfare of the local residents.

The plant has been closed since May 2018 after 13 people were killed as police opened fire to quell a protest over alleged pollution caused by it.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud (now retired) and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra also rejected Vedanta's application for listing review petition. —*PTI*

Appointment of CPS: Himachal govt moves SC

Himachal Pradesh has filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking authorisation for the appointment of six parliamentary secretaries, which was quashed by the Himachal Pradesh High Court for being illegal and unconstitutional on 13 November. The court declared the Himachal Pradesh Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances, Powers, Privileges and Amenities) Act, 2006 as void. —*PTI*

Delhi Court grants bail to bizman Katyal

A Delhi court has granted regular bail to businessman Rajesh Katyal, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for his alleged involvement in laundering over Rs 200 crore in proceeds of crime (POC) through his companies. Katyal had earlier been granted interim bail by Delhi High Court. Katyal Involved in Laundering Rs 241 Crore through Shell Companies and Foreign Investments. Enforcement Directorate (ED) has accused of defrauding innocent plot buyers. —*ANI*

₹5.85 CR FINE IMPOSED

Vehicles ply on NH-24 during smog, in New Delhi, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Air severe for 4th day in Delhi, Haryana suffers too

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Delhi's air quality worsened further on Saturday, with many areas in the "severe" category, even as authorities intensified their action by imposing penalties of around Rs 5.85 crore on the first day of anti-pollution measures under the third stage of GRAP (GRAP).

The city's 24-hour Air Quality Index (AQI), recorded at 4 pm daily, stood at 417, making it the worst in the country. On Friday, the AQI level was 396.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the "severe" category air poses risks to healthy individuals and severely impacts those with existing health conditions.

Out of Delhi's 39 monitoring stations, data shared by the CPCB showed that all except for Sri Aurobindo Marg reported air quality in the "severe" category, with AQI levels above 400.

Following Delhi, Jind in Haryana recorded the second-worst air quality with a reading of 394, while Bahadurgarh, also in the neighbouring state, ranked third with a reading of 388.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450 'severe plus'.

Moreover, stubble burning, particularly in Punjab, has exacerbated air pollution levels, with 238 farm fire incidents reported on Friday alone, bringing the total to 7,864 this season. Environmental concerns are heightened as the practice continues to threaten. —*PTI*

7 INCLUDING NEWLYWEDS KILLED IN UP ACCIDENT

BIJNOR, 16 NOV

Seven people, including a newly-wed couple, returning from Jharkhand died while two others were injured when a car hit a tempo from behind while overtaking another vehicle, police said on Saturday.

After being hit by the car, the tempo rammed into an electric pole around 2 am on Saturday near the fire station of Dhampur on the Dehradun-Nainital Highway, Superintendent of Police Abhishek said.

The tempo passengers were thrown on the ground by the impact of the accident, he said.

Wreckage of a car after an accident with an auto-rickshaw **PHOTO: PTI**

Six people of the same family travelling in the tempo were killed on the spot while its driver Ajab Singh died on the way to a hospital, the SP said.

Two people who were moving in the car have been injured, police said, adding the bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem. —*PTI*

Bodies of 197 Naxalites have been recovered so far this year **PHOTO: PTI**

5 Naxals killed, 2 cops injured in Bastar encounter

RAIPUR, 16 NOV

Five Naxalites were killed and two security personnel injured in an anti-insurgency operation in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region on Saturday, a senior police official said.

The gunfight broke out at around 8 am in a forest in north Abujhmad along the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, he said.

Personnel belonging to the Border Security Force (BSF), District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) are involved in the operation, he said.

The bodies of five Naxalites and a cache of firearms have been recovered from the spot so far, the official said, adding that a search operation is still underway in the area.

Two security personnel sustained injuries in the exchange of fire. They have been shifted to the state capital Raipur for treatment and are out of danger, he said.

Including this incident, the bodies of 197 Naxalites have been recovered so far this year following separate encounters in Bastar region, comprising seven districts —*PTI*

NAYANTHARA SLAMS DHANUSH'S ₹10 CR LAWSUIT

CHENNAI, 16 NOV

Kollywood Actress Nayanthara has caused a stir with an open letter directed at Dhanush, accusing him of obstructing her use of footage from the 2015 film 'Naanum Rowdy Dhaan' for her upcoming Netflix wedding documentary. In her letter, she alleges that Dhanush demanded a staggering Rs 10 crore to allow a mere three-second clip of songs from the film, branding it a petty and low move.

The actress called Dhanush 'vile,'highlighting the ten years since the film's release and accusing him of harbouring unfounded resentment. She concluded her letter by urging Dhanush to "spread love" instead of malice, offering a philosophical plea for reconciliation and the importance of celebrating others' successes.

As of now, Dhanush has yet to respond to the claims made in Nayanthara's letter, which have ignited discussions across film industry. —*ANI*

IN PROTEST

Kerala hold 'symbolic' pooram without jumbos

THRISSUR, 16 NOV

Days after the Kerala High Court imposed strict conditions regarding the use of elephants in festivals, a group of festival enthusiasts staged a protest on Saturday in front of Vadakkumnathan Temple, renowned for the annual Thrissur Pooram festival, albeit without the presence of any elephants.

In a symbolic gesture, protesters gathered at the temple's southern entrance, holding "nettippattam" (the ornate caparisons traditionally worn by elephants) and "venchamaram" (decorative circular fans). Organised by "Poora Premi Sangham", an association of Thrissur Pooram aficionados, the protest aimed to convey to both the court and governmental authorities the importance of maintaining traditional rituals and practices.

Devotees during a procession of the Thrissur Pooram festival **PHOTO: PTI**

Inaugurating the protest, senior CPI leader and former minister VS Sunil Kumar urged state and central governments to reconsider the ramifications of the High Court's ruling. "The state government should explore the possibility of new legislation to address the conditions outlined in the recent verdict effectively," he stated.

Participants voiced concerns that many renowned temple festivals in Kerala could cease to exist due to the new regulations. The Kerala High Court's ruling labelled the existence of captive elephants as akin to an 'eternal Treblinka', drawing parallels to the notorious Nazi extermination camp. The court asserted that these animals were being exploited commercially under the guise of tradition, leading to calls for stricter regulations. —*PTI*

India needs 2,500 varsities to fit in 50% students: NITI

HYDERABAD, 16 NOV

In order to have 50 per cent students in universities, India needs to double the varsities' strength to 2,500, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam has said.

Delivering a keynote address at the Indian School of Business (ISB) here on Friday, he said though one university and two colleges were opened every week in the past ten years, only 29 per cent of the age cohort enroll in varsities.

Subrahmanyam also said that with a huge digital infrastructure, India has become the biggest laboratory in the digital world where one can experiment at a scale.

"Today we have 1,200 universities and slightly more than four crore students, but that's only 29 per cent of the cohort age enroll in the university system.

BVR Subrahmanyam **PHOTO: PTI**

India has become a place which is digitally and financially connected with an identity, which has led to innovations one after another, he said, adding that UPI is an innovation and 48 to 50 per cent of all global financial transactions happen in India. —*PTI*

PREP FOR MAHA KUMBH

Workers construct temporary pontoon bridges over the Ganga river as part of preparations for the Maha Kumbh Mela, in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj *PHOTO: PTI*

In Pawar vs Pawar Baramati battle, people are king

Ajit Pawar's development pitch encounters Sharad Pawar's emotional hold over voters as this constituency of glitzy shops and spotless roads turns into a do-or-die battlefield for the younger Pawar amid an intense canvassing never seen before by most voters. And people are not complaining.

Dada, as the Deputy Chief Minister is often addressed, carries a certain air and would not even bother spending much time in campaigns as his win was a forgone outcome, Sandeep Jagtap (32), a farmer, said.

"He is now smiling, bowing and folding his hands seeking our votes," he adds with a laugh.

His friend Amol Kulange notes that the election has also seen an unlikely turnout of the members of the Pawar clan who are mostly backing Yugendra Pawar, the grandnephew of Sharad and fielded by him as his NCP(SP) candidate to take on the deputy chief minister.

Sharad's wife Pratibha Pawar, not much seen in previous polls, has hit the campaign trail and so have some other members of the family, Kulange says.

The respect for the four-time former chief minister, often referred to as Saheb, in his stronghold of western Maharashtra is palpable in much of the region. But his estranged nephew also appears to enjoy a stature of his own in Baramati, a constituency represented by the senior Pawar for six terms before he passed the baton to Ajit in 1991.

Ajit is now seeking his eighth straight term and the first after splitting from his uncle in 2023 along with 40 of then undivided party's 53 MLAs. His faction was recognised as the real Nationalist Congress Party.

In the town, Srikrishna Borkar, a teacher, says Ajit Pawar is behind its development, including the V P College whose infrastructure, he added, is as good as one can find anywhere.

Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar *PHOTO: PTI*

However, the picture takes on another shade as the conversation is joined by older generations.

A section of people criticises Ajit for "capturing" his uncle's party to join hands with the ruling BJP.

Mohan Akhade, a farmer in his 60s, claims that the core supporters of the NCP will never desert 'Saheb'. He asserts that it was Sharad Pawar who nursed Baramati as a model of development before picking his nephew for the job.

It is this sentimental connection with the 83-year-old leader that ensured the defeat of Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar, now a Rajya Sabha member, against Supriya Sule in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

In this Assembly poll, Yugendra Pawar may be the candidate of the NCP(SP) against the deputy chief minister, but nobody has any doubt that their choice is between Saheb and Dada.

There are also voters who say that they voted for Sule in the Lok Sabha polls for their fealty to Sharad Pawar when he faced one of his biggest political crises and they will now support Ajit Pawar as an acknowledgement of his work.

In this developed constituency of one of the more prosperous regions of Maharashtra, the state government's welfare pitch built around cash transfer schemes like 'Ladki Bahun' does not enjoy the same traction as in other places.

Instead of the ruling Mahayuti versus Maha Vikas Aghadi, the political discourse is overshadowed by the split in the Pawar family, a development seen by most as detrimental to Baramati's interests.

"Anyone who loses will lose interest in the constituency. It is in our interest that the family is united," Mehul Shinde says.

Everyone's eyes are now fixed on Sharad Pawar's expected public address in Baramati on November 18, the last day of campaigning before the polling on 20 November.

In a show of uncharacteristic aggression, he has dubbed those who deserted him to join the government as "betrayers" and has urged voters to ensure their defeat.

On the other hand, Ajit has refrained from sharp criticism of the senior Pawar, realising that they will only stir the sympathy his uncle enjoys among people.

He has instead often highlighted that Sharad Pawar was part of the talks to join hands with the BJP before changing tack.

What Sharad says or does not say to voters of Baramati will be keenly watched but what is clear is that they will have the last word after going through decades of predictable elections. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Sudan refugee women forced to have sex to survive

They fled war in Sudan. Now, women in refugee camps say they're being forced to have sex to survive

Crossing into Chad, the 27-year-old thought she'd left the horrors of Sudan's war behind: the bodies she ran over while fleeing, the screams of girls being raped, the disappearance of her husband when gunmen attacked. But now she says she has faced more suffering — being forced as a refugee to have sex to get by.

She cradled her 7-week-old son, who she asserted was the child of an aid worker who promised her money in exchange for sex.

"The children were crying. We ran out of food," she said of her four other children. "He abused my situation." She and other women who spoke to The Associated Press requested anonymity because they feared retribution.

Some Sudanese women and girls assert that men, including those meant to protect them such as humanitarian workers and local security forces, have sexually exploited them in Chad's displacement sites, offering money, easier access to assistance and jobs. Such sexual exploitation in Chad is a crime.

Hundreds of thousands of people, most of them women, have streamed into Chad to escape Sudan's civil war, which has killed over 20,000 people. Aid groups struggle to support them in growing displacement sites.

Three women spoke with the AP in the town of Adre near the Sudanese border. A Sudanese psychologist shared the accounts of seven other women and girls who either refused to speak directly with a reporter or were no longer in touch with her. The AP could not confirm their accounts.

Daral-Salam Omar, the psychologist, said all the seven told her they went along with the offers of benefits in exchange for sex out of necessity. Some sought her help because they became pregnant and couldn't seek an abortion at a clinic for fear of being shunned by their community, she said.

"They were psychologically destroyed. Imagine a woman getting pregnant without a husband amid this situation," Omar said.

Sexual exploitation during large humanitarian crises is not uncommon, especially in displacement sites. Aid groups have long struggled to combat the issue. They cite a lack of reporting by women, not enough funds to respond and a focus on first providing basic necessities.

The UN refugee agency said it doesn't publish data on cases, citing the confidentiality and safety of victims.

Sudanese women assert that men, including humanitarian workers and security forces, have sexually exploited them *PHOTO: PTI*

People seeking protection should never have to make choices driven by survival, experts said. Nidhi Kapur, who works on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in emergency contexts, said exploitation represents a deep failure by the aid community.

Yewande Odia, the United Nations Population's Fund representative in Chad, said sexual exploitation is a serious violation. UN agencies said displacement camps have "safe spaces" where women can gather, along with awareness sessions, a free hotline and feedback boxes to report abuse anonymously.

Yet many of the Sudanese women said they weren't aware of the hotline, and some said using the boxes would draw unwanted attention.

The Sudanese woman with the newborn said she was afraid to report the aid worker for fear he'd turn her in to police.

She said she approached the aid worker, a Sudanese man, after searching for jobs to buy basic necessities like soap. She asked him for money. He said he'd give her cash but only in exchange for sex.

They slept together for months, she said, and he paid the equivalent of about USD 12 each time. After she had the baby, he gave her a one-time payment of approximately USD 65 but denied it was his, she said.

The man was a Sudanese labourer for Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym MSF, she said.

Two other Sudanese women said Chadian men working at MSF sites— one wearing MSF clothing — solicited them after they applied for work with the organisation. The men took their phone numbers and repeatedly called, saying they'd give them jobs for sex. Both women said they refused.

Christopher Lockyear, MSF's secretary general, said the organization was not aware of the allegations and wanted to investigate. "Asking for money or sex in exchange for access to care or a job is a clear violation of our behavioural commitments," he said.

MSF would not say how many such cases had been reported among Sudanese refugees in Chad. Last year, out of 714 complaints made about MSF staff behaviour where it works globally, 264 were confirmed to be cases of abuse or inappropriate behaviour including sexual exploitation, abuse of power and bullying, Lockyear said.

Lockyear said MSF is creating a pool of investigators at the global level to enhance its ability to pursue allegations.

One woman told the AP that a man with another aid group also exploited her, but she was unable to identify the organisation. Omar, the psychologist, said several of the women told her they were exploited by aid workers, local and international. She gave no evidence to back up the claims.

Another woman, one of the two who alleged they were approached after seeking work with MSF, said she also refused a local policeman who approached her and promised an extra food ration card if she went to his house.

Ali Mahamat Sebey, the head official for Adre, said police are not allowed inside the camps and asserted that allegations against them of exploitation were false. With the growing influx of people, however, it's hard to protect everyone, he said.

The women said they just want to feel safe, adding that access to jobs would lessen their vulnerability. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

The American dream: 4 Indians freeze to death crossing US border

On the last night of their lives, Jagdish Patel, his wife and their two young children tried to slip into the US across a near-empty stretch of the Canadian border.

Wind chills reached minus minus 38 Celsius that night in January 2022 as the family from India set out on foot to meet a waiting van. They walked amid vast farm fields and bulky snowdrifts, navigating in the black of an almost-moonless night.

The driver, waiting in northern Minnesota, messaged his boss: "Make sure everyone is dressed for the blizzard conditions, please."

Coordinating things in Canada, federal prosecutors say, was Harshkumar Patel, an experienced smuggler nicknamed "Dirty Harry." On the US side was Steve Shand, the driver recently recruited by Patel at a casino near their Florida homes, prosecutors say.

The two men, whose trial is scheduled to start Monday, are accused of being part of a sophisticated human smuggling operation feeding a fast-growing population of Indians living illegally in the US. Both have pleaded not guilty. Over the five weeks the two worked together, documents filed by prosecutors allege they spoke often about the bitter cold as they smuggled five groups of Indians over that quiet stretch of border.

On the last trip, on 19 January, 2022, Shand was to pick up 11 more Indian migrants, including the Patels. Only seven survived.

Canadian authorities found the Patels later that morning, dead from the cold.

In Jagdish Patel's frozen arms was the body of his 3-year-old son, Dharmik, wrapped in a blanket.

Dreams of leaving India

The narrow streets of Dingucha, a quiet village in Gujarat, are spattered with ads to move overseas.

"Make your dream of going abroad come true," one poster says, listing three tantalising destinations: "Canada. Australia. USA."

This is where the family's deadly journey began.

Jagdish Patel, 39, grew up in Dingucha. He and his wife, Vaishaliben, who was in her mid-30s, lived with his parents, raising their 11-year-old daughter, Vihangi, and Dharmik. (Patel is a common Indian surname and they are unrelated to Harshkumar Patel.) The couple were schoolteachers.

The family was fairly well off by local standards, living in a well-kept, two-story house with a front patio and a wide veranda. "It wasn't a lavish life," said Vaibhav Jha, a reporter who spent days in the village. "But there was no urgent need, no desperation."

Images released by the US Attorney's Office shows items found in a migrant child's backpack *PHOTO: THE US GOVT*

Experts say illegal immigration from India is driven by everything from political repression to a dysfunctional American immigration system that can take years, if not decades, to navigate legally.

But much is rooted in economics, and how even low-wage jobs in the West can ignite hopes for a better life. Those hopes have changed Dingucha. Today, so many villagers have gone overseas — legally and otherwise — that blocks of homes stand vacant and the social media feeds of those who remain are filled with old neighbours showing off houses and cars. That drives even more people to leave. "There was so much pressure in the village, where people grew up aspiring to the good life," Jha said.

Smuggling networks were glad to help, charging fees that could reach USD 90,000 per person. In Dingucha, Jha said, many families afforded that by selling farmland.

The pipeline of illegal immigration from India has long existed but has increased sharply along the US-Canada border.

The US Border Patrol arrested more than 14,000 Indians on the Canadian border in the year ending 30 September, which amounted to 60 per cent of all arrests along that border and more than 10 times the number two years ago.

By 2022, the Pew Research Center estimates there were more than 7,25,000 Indians living illegally in the US, behind only Mexicans and El Salvadorans.

In India, investigating officer Dilip Thakor said media attention had led to the arrest of three men in the Patel case, but hundreds of such cases don't even reach the courts.

US prosecutors allege Patel and Shand were part of a sprawling operation, with people to scout for business in India, acquire Canadian student visas, arrange transportation and smuggle migrants into the US., mostly via Washington state or Minnesota. On Monday, at the federal courthouse in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, Patel, 29, and Shand, 50, will each face four counts related to human smuggling. Patel's attorney, Thomas Leinenweber, told The Associated Press his client came to America to escape poverty and build a better life and "now stands unjustly accused of participating in this horrible crime." Shand's attorney's did not return calls seeking comment. Prosecutors say Shand told investigators that Patel paid him about USD 25,000 for the five trips. His final passengers, though, never made it.

The last night

By 3 am on 19 January, 2022, the 11 Indian migrants had spent hours wandering in gusting snow and brutal cold trying to find Shand. Many were in jeans and rubber work boots. None wore serious winter clothing.

Shand, though, was stuck. Prosecutors allege he had been heading to the pickup spot in a rented 15-passenger van when he drove into a ditch roughly a half-mile from the border.

Eventually, two migrants stumbled across the van. Sometime later, a passing pipeline company worker pulled the vehicle from the ditch.

Soon after that, a US Border Patrol agent, on watch for migrants after boot prints were found near the border, pulled over Shand. Shand repeatedly insisted there was no one else outside, even as five more desperate Indians wandered to the vehicle from the fields, including one going in and out of consciousness. They had been walking for more than 11 hours.

There were no children among the migrants, but one man had a backpack filled with toys, children's clothes and diapers. He said a family of four Indians asked him to hold it, because they had to carry their young son. Sometime in the night they had become separated.

Hours later, the Patels' bodies were found just inside Canada, in a field near where the migrants had crossed into the US. Jagdish was holding Dharmik, with daughter Vihangi nearby. Vaishaliben was a short walk away. *—PTI*

Vivek indicates massive govt job cuts in US

Ramaswamy hints at mass deportations of millions of unelected federal bureaucrats out of DC bureaucracy

WASHINGTON, 16 NOV

Entrepreneur-turned politician Vivek Ramaswamy, who along with Tesla owner Elon Musk has been nominated in-charge of the Department of Government Efficiency, has indicated a massive cut in federal government jobs in the United States.

"Elon Musk and I are in a position to start the mass deportations of millions of unelected federal bureaucrats out of the DC bureaucracy. That, too, is how we're going to save this country," Ramaswamy, an Indian American, said at an event in Mar-a-Lago in Florida on Thursday.

"I don't know if you've got to know Elon yet, but he doesn't bring a chisel. He brings a chainsaw. We are going to be taking it to that bureaucracy. It's going to be a lot of fun," he said.

Meanwhile, Musk and Ramaswamy announced that they will livestream every week to update the American public on the progress of the works by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

"Our goal is to shave the size of government and to be as transparent as possible with the public. Weekly 'Dogecasts' will start soon," Ramaswamy said.

Ramaswamy, however, argued that too much bureaucracy means less innovation and higher costs. "That's a real problem with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and countless other 3-letter agencies," he said, adding, "They are utterly agnostic to how their daily decisions stifle new inventions and impose costs that deter growth."

"I think the major problem holding our country back is a federal bureaucracy. Target that cost, save the money, restore self-governance," Ramaswamy said. —*PTI*

> **Elon Musk and I are in a position to start the mass deportations of millions of unelected federal bureaucrats out of the DC bureaucracy. That, too, is how we're going to save this country**
> -Vivek Ramaswamy, DOGE Head

Trump's Pentagon pick had been flagged as 'Insider Threat'

WASHINGTON, 16 NOV

Pete Hegseth, the Army National Guard veteran and Fox News host nominated by Donald Trump to lead the Department of Defence, was flagged as a possible "Insider Threat" by a fellow service member due to a tattoo on his bicep that's associated with white supremacist groups.

Hegseth, who has downplayed the role of military members and veterans in the 6 January, 2021, attack and railed against the Pentagon's

Pete Hegseth ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

subsequent efforts to address extremism in the ranks, has said he was pulled by his District of Columbia National Guard unit from guarding Joe Biden's January 2021 inauguration. He's said he was unfairly identified as an extremist due to a cross tattoo on his chest. This week, however, a fellow Guard member who was the unit's security manager and on an anti-terrorism team at the time, shared with The Associated Press an email he sent to the unit's leadership flagging a different tattoo reading "Deus Vult" that's been used by white supremacists, concerned it was an indication of an "Insider Threat." —*PTI*

Indian Americans to urge Trump for sanctions against Bangladesh

Indian Americans are working to reach out to the new Trump administration and Congress next year to seek action against the Bangladeshi regime, including imposing economic sanctions. Encouraged by the recent statement of Trump on Bangladesh, Dr Bharat Barai, an Indian American physician, exuded confidence that Trump would act against the nation over the persecution of the Hindu minority. —*PTI*

Trump names Leavitt as White House Press Secy

WASHINGTON, 16 NOV

US President-elect Donald Trump on Friday named Karoline Leavitt as White House Press Secretary.

Leavitt, 27, would replace Karine Jean-Pierre as the White House Press Secretary on January 20, 2025 when Trump takes oath as the 47th President of the United States. She was the Trump Campaign's National Press Secretary and has previously served in the Trump White House as Assistant Press Secretary.

Among other nominations announced by Trump, Steven Cheung will return to the White House as Assistant to the President. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X@MATTHEW_SEDE

US returns 1,400 antiquities valued $10M to India

NEW YORK, 16 NOV

At least 1,440 antiquities collectively valued at USD 10 million will be returned to India, a statement has said. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L Bragg, Jr, in a statement on Wednesday, said the pieces recovered under several ongoing investigations into criminal trafficking networks, including those of alleged antiquities trafficker Subhash Kapoor and convicted trafficker Nancy Wiener, were returned at a ceremony. The returned pieces included a sandstone sculpture depicting a Celestial Dancer looted from a temple in Madhya Pradesh, the Tanesar Mother Goddess carved from green-grey schist and looted from the village of Tanesara-Mahadeva in Rajasthan. —*PTI*

Japan's Minister visits Ukraine over N Korean troops

KYIV, 16 NOV

Japan's Foreign Minister arrived in Kyiv on Saturday to discuss North Korea's deepening military alliance with Russia, including the deployment of thousands of troops to support Moscow's war in Ukraine. Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will meet his Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiha, to reaffirm Japan's "strong support" for Ukraine against Russia's invasion and to discuss further sanctions against Moscow, Japan's Foreign Ministry said. According to US, South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments, up to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia as part of a major defence treaty between the nations. —*PTI*

Indian student applications to UK decline

LONDON, 16 NOV

A recent report has highlighted a significant decline in applications from Indian students to UK universities, exacerbating financial difficulties for institutions already facing budget constraints. An analysis by the Office for Students (OfS) reveals a staggering 20.4 per cent drop in Indian student numbers, from 139,914 in 2022-23 to 111,329 for the current academic year. The report, based on data from the UK Home Office regarding confirmations of acceptance for studies (CAS), points to a broader trend affecting international students. It indicates an overall 11.8 per cent decrease in sponsor acceptances, with the largest declines seen among Indian and Nigerian students, down by 28,585 (20.4 per cent) and 25,897 (44.6 per cent), respectively. Indian student groups attribute this downturn to limited job prospects and increased safety concerns following recent anti-immigration protests. —*PTI*

Lanka Prez to appoint PM, Cabinet soon

Anura Kumara Dissanayake ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

COLOMBO, 16 NOV

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will appoint a new Prime Minister and Cabinet on Monday following his National People's Power (NPP) party's remarkable success in the recent snap general election. The NPP achieved a historic two-thirds majority, dominating the parliamentary elections and especially excelling in the Jaffna electoral district, which is significant to the Tamil minority.

Tilwin Silva, a senior spokesman for the NPP, announced plans to limit the new Cabinet to 25 ministers, potentially fewer, with a "scientific allocation of subjects for the ministries." According to Article 46 of the Constitution, the maximum number of Cabinet ministers is capped at 30, while the aggregate number of deputy ministers may exceed 40.

The NPP, which has been advocating for a streamlined government to cut public costs, has been operating with just three ministers, including the President, since winning the presidential election in September. The NPP's recent electoral success marks multiple milestones: securing 61.56 per cent of the vote, winning 152 out of 168 polling divisions, and attaining 159 parliamentary seats—the most in the party's history, surpassing previous records. - —*PTI*

Smoke covers a building that collapses following an Israeli airstike in Tayouneh, Beirut, Lebanon ***PHOTO: PTI***

Israel intensifies strikes on Lebanon amid US ceasefire deal

BEIRUT, 16 NOV

The Israeli military has continued airstrikes on the suburbs of Beirut for the fourth consecutive day, as Lebanese officials evaluate a ceasefire proposal presented by the US, Al Jazeera reported on Friday.

Israeli air raids destroyed five buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs, including one near the busy Tayouneh intersection. The Israeli military stated that its fighter jets targeted munitions depots, a headquarters, and other infrastructure used by the Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah. According to Al Jazeera, Israel had issued two evacuation orders before the attacks, forcing residents to leave their homes. While many left the area, no casualties were reported, as the evacuation orders provided people with enough time to flee. However, human rights organizations have criticised the short notice given to residents in some instances, Al Jazeera reported.

Hezbollah had also fired rockets at Israeli soldiers in northern Israel, targeting the Misgav Am area, the Yiftah barracks, and other locations on the eastern outskirts of the Lebanese town of Markaba, as well as Israeli positions in northern Israel's Sasa and Dishon.

Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire have gained some momentum this week as the US ambassador to Lebanon presented a ceasefire draft to the Lebanese parliament on Friday, as reported by CNN, citing sources. Officials are "hopeful" that Hezbollah would accept the terms of the agreement and are expected to provide an official response to the latest proposal by Monday, CNN reported. According to Al Jazeera, Iran had expressed support for Lebanon's decisions in the truce talks. —*ANI*

IMF raises concerns on Pak's tax shortfall

ISLAMABAD, 16 NOV

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has highlighted significant challenges facing Pakistan in implementing its USD 7 billion loan package, particularly concerning tax shortfalls and delays in securing foreign loans. Following a comprehensive five-day mission during which IMF officials engaged with Pakistani authorities, concerns regarding Punjab's new agriculture income tax law emerged, with claims that it is not fully aligned with federal legislation and diverges from the National Fiscal Pact, as reported by The Express Tribune. Among the IMF's major findings were the underperformance of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the delay in finalising loans needed to address a USD 2.5 billion funding gap. The organisation urged Pakistan to negotiate with Riyadh for deferred oil payments and to approach Beijing for debt rescheduling.

Additionally, the IMF voiced its apprehensions about the slow pace of privatisation for power distribution companies (DISCOs) and reiterated its demand for the amendment of the Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund Act by the end of December. It also highlighted the need for timely reporting on circular debt in the gas sector, which remains inconsistently documented by the relevant divisions. —*PTI*

Stop N Korea from aiding Russia: Biden urges China

LIMA, 16 NOV

In anticipation of his upcoming transition to Republican President-elect Donald Trump, President Biden will address the escalating situation at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru this Saturday. Officials indicate his plea to Xi will focus on mitigating North Korea's alliance with Moscow, which has included sending troops and munitions to aid Russian forces as they face challenges in Ukraine.

Biden recently condemned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's decisions as "dangerous and destabilising," calling upon Beijing to leverage its significant trade influence over Pyongyang to restore stability in the region. Following discussions with South Korean President Yoon Seok Yul and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, they echoed the sentiment that such an alignment should not serve Beijing's interests.

Beyond North Korea, Biden and Xi are expected to navigate complex discussions encompassing China's indirect support for Russia, human rights concerns, Taiwan, and technology issues. The meeting arrives at a time of uncertainty regarding US-China relations under President Trump, who previously threatened extensive tariffs on Chinese imports.

As Biden concludes over 50 years in public service, this meeting symbolises a culmination of efforts to foster cooperation with Xi, despite facing numerous challenges, including cybersecurity threats attributed to China and escalating military tensions in the South China Sea and around Taiwan. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHILIPPINES EVACUATES THOUSANDS AS SUPER TYPHOON MAN-YI NEARS

Manila, 16 Nov

The Philippines has ordered the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people and cancelled dozens of flights as a "potentially catastrophic" typhoon – the sixth storm in a month – approaches the archipelago.

Packing winds of 240km/h, Man-yi was upgraded to a super typhoon by state weather agency PAGASA.

It warned of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening situation" for the central region of Bicol, where nearly 1,80,000 people have been evacuated. Man-yi was heading towards the eastern part of the main island of Luzon, prompting PAGASA to raise its highest Category 5 alert for Catanduanes and Category 4 for the northern part of Camarines Sur province. Both provinces are still recovering from the deadly Tropical Storm Trami, which hit the country in late October. The mayor of Naga city in Camarines Sur imposed a curfew from midday on Saturday in a bid to force residents indoors. The weather agency warned of dangerous storm surges that could exceed 3m in coastal areas of Luzon. In October, floods and landslides brought by Tropical Storm Trami and Typhoon Kong-rey killed 162 people, with 22 others reported missing, government figures show. —*Courtesy, Al Jazeera*

UN expects bolder climate action from G20 leaders

Baku, 16 Nov

Terming bolder climate action as "self-preservation for every G20 economy," UN climate Chief Simon Stiell on Saturday urged the grouping's leaders headed to Rio de Janeiro to carry out rapid cuts in emissions to prevent climate-driven economic carnage.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden will be among the leaders attending the G20 Summit on 18 and 19 November.

In an address at the COP29 here in Azerbaijan's capital, Stiell, the Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said that G20 was created to tackle problems that no one country, or group of countries, can tackle alone.

"On that basis, the global climate crisis should be the priority in Rio next week," he added.

PHOTO: X

Climate impacts are already ripping shreds out of every G20 economy, wrecking lives, pummelling supply chains and food prices, and fanning inflation, Stiell said.

"Bolder climate action is basic self-preservation for every G20 economy. Without rapid cuts in emissions, no G20 economy will be spared from climate-driven economic carnage," he added. —*PTI*

AMID STRUGGLE FOR PROGRESS

Protesters rally at UN climate talks

BAKU, 16 NOV

The United Nations climate talks, known as COP29, approached the end of their first week with negotiators still grappling over how much compensation wealthier nations will provide to developing countries facing the harsh realities of climate change. Activists were preparing for actions on what is traditionally the largest protest day of the two-week event, coinciding with a global "day of action" for climate justice, marked annually across the world.

As negotiators strive for a potentially lucrative deal worth billions for poorer nations primarily in the Global South, experts estimate that at least USD 1 trillion annually is required to address damage from climate-related disasters and to facilitate the clean-energy transition that many countries cannot afford independently.

Climate activists stage a protest during the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP29 in Baku ***PHOTO: EPA***

The discussions faced criticism from various fronts, including a letter from two former UN officials advocating for a shift from negotiation to implementation. Former US Vice President Al Gore and others called attention to the significant presence of the fossil fuel industry and fossil-fuel-dependent nations, with over 1,770 attendees linked to the sector. Yalchin Rafiyev, the conference's chief negotiator, recognised the slow pace of talks but defended the process, stating, "The COP has already delivered by reducing projected warming and providing finance to those in need." Anticipation builds for progress as numerous national ministers arrive in the second week to lend their support. —*PTI*

DVC signs PPA with GUVNL to supply 559 MW electricity

KOLKATA, 16 NOV

Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) on Saturday said it has inked a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL) for 559 MW to meet the rising electricity demand in Gujarat. DVC in a statement said the agreement, approved by the Ministry of Power, will facilitate the supply of 359 MW from DVC's upcoming Durgapur Thermal Power Station (1x800 MW) in West Bengal and 200 MW from its Koderma Thermal Power Station Phase II in Jharkhand.It was a two-day event (15-16 Nov) bringing together leaders from DVC's nationwide. —*PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

Think out of the box, adapt to tech landscape: CAG

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu on Saturday urged officers to think out of the box, experiment with new techniques, and adapt to the changing technological and governance environment. ith the increasing use of AI and emerging technologies to provide services, he said there are numerous risks, ranging from privacy breaches and algorithmic biases to social exclusion. Murmu emphasised that in the quest for strengthening auditing and accounting practices, "all offices of the CAG's organisation are encouraged to think out-of-the-box and adapt to changing technological and governance environment" by experimenting with new techniques, which help in nurturing creativity in methodologies. —*PTI*

SPH, GDX partner to boost drone aviation security

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

SPH Aviation, a subsidiary of AVPL International, has signed a partnership agreement with security firm GDX Security Solutions to integrate drone technology into aviation security operations and establish training programmes for drone pilots in India. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) between SPH Aviation and GDX Security, which has an annual revenue of Rs 2,000 crore, aims to set up remote pilot training organisations and launch drone-as-a-service solutions. SPH Aviation will train GDX security personnel as certified drone pilots under Indian aviation regulator DGCA guidelines and help establish training facilities. The companies will also collaborate on research and development projects for custom drone security solutions, a statement said. —*PTI*

IAC urges GOI & OEMs to adopt LPG as a 'Net Zero Hero'

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

As LPG Week 2024, organised by the World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA), approaches, Suyash Gupta, Director General of the Indian Auto LPG Coalition (IAC), has called upon the Government of India and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to embrace Auto LPG as a cleaner and more cost-effective fuel alternative. Describing Auto LPG as a "Net Zero Hero," Gupta emphasized its transformative environmental and economic benefits in the push toward a cleaner automotive energy landscape. The global event, taking place from 18-22 November in Cape Town, South Africa, will bring together leaders from over 300 companies across 125 countries to explore advancements in LPG and Autogas. A key highlight of the conference, Autogas Day on 21 November, will feature expert panels, exhibitions, and virtual discussions focused on the competitive and environmental advantages of Autogas worldwide. —*ANI*

Gold prices dip 6% amid stronger dollar & US inflation

US inflation rise fuels speculation on shift in Fed policy

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Gold prices have witnessed a significant decline of around 6 per cent since Diwali, driven by a stronger dollar and concerns over US inflation data.

The rate of 24-carat gold per 10 grams, which stood at Rs80,710 on 1 November, dropped to Rs75,920 on Saturday. This sharp correction reflects ongoing global economic pressures influencing commodity markets.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, highlighted the factors behind the price drop, stating, "Gold's weakness persisted with prices falling below USD 2,550 and near Rs73,500 on MCX as the dollar climbed above 106.50 and edged closer to 107. The US CPI data, which came in higher at 2.6 per cent compared to the expected 2.4 per cent, fueled the dollar's strength."

Ongoing correction in gold prices comes after prolonged rally **PHOTO: PTI**

The uptick in US inflation has sparked speculation about a potential shift in the Federal Reserve's monetary policy. While the Fed has been pursuing rate cuts as inflation approached its 2 per cent target, the higher-than-expected CPI reading has raised concerns that further cuts may be paused.

The ongoing correction in gold prices comes after a prolonged rally earlier this year, which saw the precious metal hit record highs.

Analysts attribute the recent dip to a combination of robust economic data from the US and the resulting resilience in the dollar, making gold less attractive as a safe-haven asset. Looking ahead, market experts suggest that gold's trajectory will depend on upcoming economic indicators and Federal Reserve announcements. Traders and investors are advised to monitor global cues closely as uncertainty looms over the precious metals market. —*ANI*

SUBSTANTIAL SLOWDOWN

PHOTO: PTI

FPI sold equities of ₹2,426 cr this week

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

The pace of selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in the Indian equity market slowed down in the second week of November, according to data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).

The data highlighted that between 11 and 14 November, FPIs recorded net sales of Rs 2,426 crore, significantly lower than the massive outflow of Rs 19,994 crore during the first week of November.

Despite the reduced pace of selling, the overall FPI selling trend remains negative. For the month of November so far, foreign investors have pulled out a total of Rs 22,420 crore from Indian equities.

This marks a continued streak of net outflows, reflecting cautious sentiment among global investors amid uncertain market conditions.

The sustained selling pressure has also turned FPIs' net investment in equities negative for the year 2024. As of now, the net selling by FPIs in the equity segment stands at Rs 15,827 crore, reversing the positive flows seen earlier in the year.

The FPI outflows come at a time when the global economic environment is marked by geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and central bank actions, which have made investors more risk-averse. Analysts believe that foreign investors are reallocating their portfolios towards safer assets or other emerging markets, impacting India's equity market dynamics. —*ANI*

India outshines China; unaffected by Trump's trade policies: CLSA

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

India is emerging as one of the least affected markets in the region when it comes to former US President Donald Trump's trade policies, highlighted a report by global brokerage firm CLSA.

The report stated that this resilience is attributed to India's relatively low trade exposure to the US, manageable corporate leverage, and declining levels of foreign equity ownership. While other markets might face greater vulnerabilities, India remains better positioned to weather such challenges.

The report also reversed its tactical overweight on China while raising its exposure to a 20 per cent overweight on India. It said "We therefore reverse our tactical allocation in early October, returning to a benchmark on China and a 20 per cent overweight on India."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US Prez-elect Donald Trump**PHOTO: PTI**

It mentioned that one of the key factors supporting India's stability is its ability to maintain relative foreign exchange (FX) stability, especially if global energy prices remain stable.

It stated that many foreign investors, in fact, see this dip as a potential buying opportunity to address their underexposure to India. While valuations remain slightly high, they are becoming more appealing to investors.

A key risk to Indian equities, however, is the possibility of an overwhelming volume of new stock issuances. The cumulative 12-month issuance currently stands at 1.5 per cent of the market capitalisation, a level often seen as a historical tipping point that could strain the market. — *ANI*

'Technical textiles key to India's economic growth'

GUWAHATI, 16 NOV

Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh on Saturday stated that technical textiles will become the economic backbone of India, according to a release by the Ministry of Textiles.

Speaking at the 43rd India International Trade Fair (IITF), the minister highlighted the significance of carbon fibres in the textile industry and India's focus on the amplification of technical textiles. "There are 12 verticals or sectors in technical textiles," he added.

As India marks the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda, the theme of the event is inspired by the 'Janjatiya' community, Singh noted.

The minister also stressed the government's efforts to enhance the textile value chain to create better income opportunities for weavers and their families. —*ANI*

PHOTO: X

US solar market eyes Indian exports

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

India stands to play a pivotal role in supporting the US renewable energy sector with its large-scale manufacturing capabilities, competitive production costs, and a strong STEM talent pool, highlighted a report by ValueQuest Investment.

The report noted that as the United States navigates the complexities of energy policy under the Trump administration, the outlook for renewable energy remains robust.

It said "India's large scale manufacturing base, STEM talent, competitive cost of production (vs South-east Asia & Mexico), with reliability of supply can make it a preferred partner of choice"

The report also indicated that India could potentially replace Southeast Asian countries as the leading solar PV exporter to the US, especially as the US seeks to reduce its dependence on Chinese supply chains.

The report stated that the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in US has created a solid foundation for accelerating investments in renewables, particularly solar energy, which has surged to 178 GW by 2023 from just 15 GW in 2013.

Moreover, the current geopolitical climate, characterised by an anti-China sentiment, presents significant opportunities for India.

As the US aims to diversify its trade partnerships, India's existing trade relationships across various industries, including software and pharmaceuticals, can facilitate a smoother transition into renewable energy collaboration.

Several Indian companies are already establishing manufacturing capacities in the US, mitigating risks and positioning themselves to benefit from tax credits associated with renewable energy production. —*ANI*

CBDT cracks down on undeclared wealth

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

The income tax department on Saturday said it has launched a campaign to send messages to taxpayers who have not disclosed high-value foreign income or assets in their ITRs for AY 2024-25.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has launched a Compliance-Cum-Awareness Campaign for Assessment Year (AY) 2024-25 to assist taxpayers in accurately completing Schedule Foreign Assets (Schedule FA) and reporting income from foreign sources (Schedule FSI) in their income tax returns (ITR).

In a statement, CBDT said informational messages will be sent via SMS and email to resident taxpayers who have already submitted their ITRs for AY 2024-25. These messages are intended for individuals identified through information received under bilateral and multilateral agreements, suggesting that they may hold foreign accounts or assets, or have received income from foreign jurisdictions.

PHOTO: X

The purpose is to remind and guide those who may not have fully completed Schedule Foreign Assets in their submitted ITR for AY 2024-25, especially in cases involving high-value foreign assets, it added.

By using technology and leveraging data obtained through the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI), department is working to create a more efficient, taxpayer-friendly system, CBDT said. —*PTI*

Aditya Steel plans 5 MW solar plant, ₹5.87 cr profit

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Rolled steel products manufacturer Aditya Ultra Steel Ltd has reported a net profit of Rs 5.87 crore for April-September period of 2024-25 and also announced setting up a 5 MW solar plant at Rajkot in Gujarat.

The company in a statement on Saturday said its revenue from operations stood at Rs 312.39 crore in the first six months of 2024-25. Operating profit stood at Rs 10.50 crore in the period under review.

The rolled steel products maker, which sells products under the Kamdhenu brand, listed on NSE SME platform in September following its around Rs 46 crore IPO. The company had reported revenue of Rs 587.80 crore in FY24 while profit was Rs 7.69 crore in the fiscal.

Aditya Ultra Steel Ltd Managing Director Sunny Sunil Singhi said that the company is setting up a Rs 15-crore solar power plant with a capacity of 5,000 KWP at Jasdan, Rajkot. —*PTI*

Panchayats' revenue woes: ₹59 per capita reality

PHOTO: PIXABAY

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Own Source Revenue (OSR) generation for panchayats remains low, with the income through tax collected by the rural local governance bodies on an average being just Rs 59 per capita between 2017 and 2022, according to government data.

Even as the generation of OSR for panchayats has come into focus to give these rural bodies more financial autonomy, according to the data compiled by the Panchayati Raj ministry, between 2017 and 2022, only an amount of Rs 5,118.98 crore was raised as OSR by the panchayats.

This comes down to Rs 59 per capita and Rs 2.27 lakh per panchayat over the five-year period for 2.25 lakh gram panchayats across the country. The total population coming under these panchayats was more than 86.95 crore in the said period.

Among the states, Gujarat collected the highest amount as OSR at Rs 829.75 crore, while Kerala came second collecting Rs 802.95 crore.

Andhra Pradesh, which raised Rs 791.93 crore, occupied the third position, followed by Karnataka (Rs 627.56 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs 516.3 crore) and West Bengal (Rs 435.17 crore).

In terms of the per capita OSR raised by the panchayats, Goa topped the list with Rs 1,635 raised in taxes per person, followed by Puducherry, which raised Rs 757 per capita.

The total 15th Finance Commission fund allocation to rural bodies is around Rs 2.36 lakh crore (2021-22 to 2025-26). —*PTI*

SINCE 2000

Indian equity mkt delivered stronger returns than China's mkt

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Indian equity markets have delivered stronger returns compared to China's equity markets since 2000, highlighted a report by Deutsche Bank

The report noted that while China has experienced robust economic growth, its equity market performance has been relatively modest, with real returns averaging +4.0 per cent per annum since 2000. In contrast, India has emerged as a leader among both emerging and developed markets, offering one of the highest real equity returns of +6.9 per cent per annum over the same period.

It said "India has one of the highest real equity returns (+6.9% p.a.) of the main EM and DM countries in the 2000-2024 QC"

The report also highlighted that, as of 2024, India and the US are among the few markets trading close to record-high CAPE (Cyclically Adjusted Price-to-Earnings) ratios. This metric, which measures earnings over a 10-year period, smooths out cyclical variations but may not fully account for structural changes in market dynamics.

- The report also highlighted that, as of 2024, India and the US are among the few markets trading close to record-high CAPE (Cyclically Adjusted Price-to-Earnings) ratios

It suggested that India's positive growth outlook and its potential as a key player in global markets also explain why investors are willing to pay a premium.

Heading into the new quarter-century (2025-2049), the report added that India and the US begin on a high note but remain expensive compared to markets with more normalized valuations. This positions them as markets to watch, with their growth trajectories closely tied to investor confidence in their structural strengths and future prospects. —*ANI*

PHOTO: X

PHOTO: PTI

T20I series win in SA special: coach VVS Laxman

JOHANNESBURG, 16 NOV

India head coach for South Africa tour VVS Laxman has hailed the T20 International series triumph as "a special effort" after his team secured a massive 135-run win in the last match here. India won the four-match T20I series 3-1, with the likes of batters Tilak Varma and Sanju Samson, and bowler Varun Chakravarty making a big impact. "Proud of our guys for the spirit with which they played this entire series. 3-1 win is a special effort, brilliantly led by @surya_14kumar, @IamSanjuSamson, and Tilak were unstoppable with the bat and V arun Chakravarty was outstanding with the ball," Laxman posted on his "X" account."... the entire team the way they played and enjoyed each other's success, couldn't be prouder of the boys. Congratulations on a memorable win," the batting great said in a post on X. *—PTI*

Rohit Sharma blessed with a baby boy

MUMBAI, 16 NOV

India captain Rohit Sharma has been blessed with a baby boy and there is a possibility that he will make it to the Perth Test against Australia starting 22 November.His wife Ritika Sajdeh gave birth to a baby boy at a local hospital here Friday night.Rohit didn't travel to Australia with the rest of the Indian squad as Ritika was expecting their second child. The couple have a daughter Samaira, born in 2018.With less than a week left for the first Test, it is not clear if Rohit, after just a couple of practice sessions, will play the match even if he decides to travel to Australia at the earliest, but nothing can be ruled out as of now. There were doubts about Rohit's participation in the first Test although head coach Gautam Gambhir was quite hopeful that the captain might just be available.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Egor becomes first Russian to play on PGA Tour

SOUTHAMPTON, 16 NOV

Egor Eroshenko already made history as the first Russian to play on the PGA Tour. It got even better Friday when he became the first Russian to cut. Eroshenko shot 31 on his final nine for a 4-under 67 in the Butterfield Bermuda Championship, extending his weekend in his first time playing a tournament recognized by the Official World Golf Ranking. "I'm super excited," said Eroshenko, who played four years at the University of Central Florida. "I'm still kind of in the fog not figuring out what's happening, but hopefully I can go grab some lunch and realize the cut is made and hoping for a good weekend."*—PTI*

Pogba and Juventus end contract mutually

TURIN, 16 NOV

Paul Pogba will no longer be a Juventus player from next month. Juventus announced on Friday it came to "a mutual agreement" with Pogba to cancel his contract despite the France World Cup winner having a ban for doping slashed last month. The Serie A club never seemed overly enthusiastic about welcoming Pogba back after his four-year ban for doping was reduced to 18 months following an appeal to the Court.*—PTI*

Cleveland native Jake Paul beats 58-year-old Tyson

Fight featured 8 rounds of 2 minutes each

ARLINGTON, 16 NOV

Jake Paul hits Mike Tyson during their heavyweight boxing match, in Arlington, Texas *PHOTO: @JAKEPAUL*

The boos from a crowd wanting more action were growing again when Jake Paul dropped his gloves before the final bell and bowed toward 58-year-old Mike Tyson.

Paying homage to one of the biggest names in boxing history didn't do much for the fans that filled the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys on Friday night.

Paul won a unanimous decision over Tyson as the hits didn't match the hype in a fight between the 27-year-old YouTuber-turned-boxer and the former heavyweight champion in his first sanctioned pro fight in almost 20 years.

All the hate from the pre-fight buildup was gone, replaced by boos from bewildered fans hoping for more action in a fight that drew plenty of questions about its legitimacy long before it happened. The fight wasn't close on the judge's cards, with one giving Paul an 80-72 edge and the other two calling it 79-73. The fight featured 8 rounds of 2 minutes each with both Jake and Mike. Tyson came after Paul immediately after the opening bell and landed a couple of quick punches but didn't try much else the rest of the way. Even fewer rounds and shorter rounds, along with heavier gloves designed to lessen the power of punches, couldn't do much to generate action. Paul was more aggressive after the quick burst from Tyson in the opening seconds, but the punching wasn't very efficient. There were quite a few wild swings and misses.

Tyson mostly sat back and waited for Paul to come to him, with a few exceptions. It was quite the contrast to the co-main event, another slugfest between Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano in which Taylor kept her undisputed super lightweight championship with another disputed decision.

It was the first sanctioned fight since 2005 for Tyson, who fought Roy Jones in a much more entertaining exhibition in 2020. Paul started fighting a little more than four years ago.The fight was originally scheduled for 20 July but had to be postponed when Tyson was treated for a stomach ulcer after falling ill on a flight. *—PTI*

BERMUDA CHAMPIONSHIP

Justin Lower has chased his first PGA Tour victory

SOUTHAMPTON, 16 NOV

Justin Lower had another 6-under 65 without taking advantage of the par 5s on Friday, giving him a two-shot lead going into the weekend at the Butterfield Bermuda Championship.

The island paradise was more like a grind in the wind and squalls of rain at Port Royal. Justin Lower has chased his first PGA Tour victory.

Lower, coming off a runner-up finish last week in Mexico, opened with three birdies in five holes and seized control with three straight birdies starting at No. 12 with a 6-foot putt. He rolled in a 20-footer from off the green at the 13th and made a sharp-breaking 15-footer on the next hole. The streak ended when his bunker shot on the 15th grazed the cup.

Justin Lower

He just finished he could have picked up shots on the par 5s. He was in range at the 17th, only to miss the green right. His pitch rolled out to 12 feet and he missed the birdie putt.

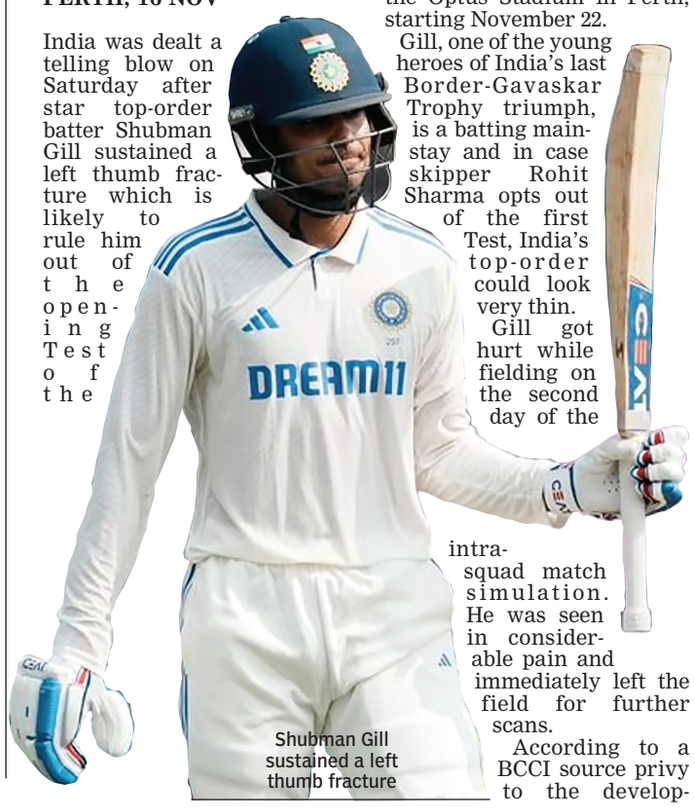
"To not get the par 5s when they're all kind of reachable other than No. 2 just being into the wind, that part kind of sucks," Lower said. "It would have been nice to get one of those last two putts to go in on 17, 18, but still a great round and I'm happy where I'm at."

He was at 12-under 130, two shots ahead of Robby Shelton (64) and Ryan Moore (65).

Lower already has his card locked up for next year after last week. A victory would get him into the Masters and the first two $20 million signature events in 2025. Shelton and Moore are outside the top 150 in the FedEx Cup. The PGA Tour season ends next week, and the top 125 keep full status for next year. *—PTI*

Blow for India as Gill fractures left thumb, all but out of Perth Test

NEW DELHI/ PERTH, 16 NOV



Shubman Gill sustained a left thumb fracture

India was dealt a telling blow on Saturday after star top-order batter Shubman Gill sustained a left thumb fracture which is likely to rule him out of the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at the Optus Stadium in Perth, starting November 22.

Gill, one of the young heroes of India's last Border-Gavaskar Trophy triumph, is a batting mainstay and in case skipper Rohit Sharma opts out of the first Test, India's top-order could look very thin.

Gill got hurt while fielding on the second day of the intra-squad match simulation. He was seen in considerable pain and immediately left the field for further scans.

According to a BCCI source privy to the development, Gill has indeed fractured his left thumb and with less than a week left for the Test to start, it will be near impossible for the stylish right-hander to get fit in time for the opening match.

A thumb fracture generally takes around 14 days to heal after which one is expected to start his regular net sessions. Since the second Test in Adelaide starts on December 6, there remains a possibility that he will get fit in time for that match.

Gill's absence could be massive for the national team as he is not only a stable number three batter but in case of Rohit's absence, he could be considered for opening the innings with Yashasvi Jaiswal.

The other man in contention, Lokesh Rahul, has a bruised elbow after getting hit by a Prasidh Krishna short ball on the opening day of the intra-squad match and was forced to leave the field.

Rahul's bruised area needed icing and he didn't take the field on the second day of the match simulation on Saturday although it is being seen more as a precautionary measure. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

ICC begins Trophy Tour for Pak

ISLAMABAD, 16 NOV

Cities in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) found no mention in the Champions Trophy tour unveiled by the ICC on Saturday as the world body moved in swiftly to have them dropped from the host country's itinerary following India's strong objection.

The Trophy Tour will now comprise Karachi, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad, apart from Abbottabad in the Khyber Pakhtunwala Region.

The Trophy Tour starts in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, and will travel to other cities of the nation -- Taxila and Khanpur (17 November), Abbottabad (18 November), Murree (19 November), and Nathia Gali (20 November) before concluding in Karachi (22-25 November). Most of these cities are tourist attractions,

Earlier, on 14 November, the PCB had announced the Trophy Tour, which included cities like Skardu, Hunza, and Muzaffarabad, which fall in the PoK region, a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.

The PTI reported on Friday that the Board of Control for

PHOTO: X

Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Jay Shah had raised strong objections with the ICC to PCB's Trophy Tour plans in the PoK region.

However, the global body took swift action to eliminate those cities from the tour as revealed on Saturday.

The cities for the Trophy Tour outside Pakistan will be announced in due course.

"A series of physical and digital engagements traversing iconic destinations, sporting events, and key battles in the international cricket calendar form the Trophy Tour schedule, during which fans will also be treated to a content series titled 'Champion on Tour' that will document the Trophy Tour's journey around the world through the lens of food, music, and cricket," ICC said in a release. Pakistan is the defending champion of the event, having won the title at The Oval in London in 2017, defeating India in the final. *—PTI*

IT WILL TOUR AFGHANISTAN

- 26-28 November

FOLLOWED BY BANGLADESH

- 10-13 December

SOUTH AFRICA

- 15-22 December

AUSTRALIA

- 25 December 5 January

NEW ZEALAND

- 6-11 January

ENGLAND

- 12-14 January

INDIA

- 15-26 January

THE CITIES FOR THE TROPHY TOUR OUTSIDE PAKISTAN WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN DUE COURSE

Lad, Raghuvanshi 50s power Mumbai to 9-wkt win

NEW DELHI, 16 NOV

Siddesh Lad and Angkrish Raghuvanshi made prudent fifties as Mumbai registered a facile nine-wicket win over Services on the fourth and final day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match here on Saturday.

Mumbai, resuming from overnight 24 for one, breezed past the target of 135 in 35.4 overs. Lad (73 not out, 93b, 8x4, 2x6) and Raghuvanshi (55 not out, 114b, 6x4) milked 128 runs for the unbroken second wicket stand as Mumbai ended up at 137 for one at Palam ground.

The victory enabled Mumbai to maintain their third sport in the group with 22 points, behind Baroda (27) and Jammu and Kashmir (23) after five rounds.

Services stayed put in the fifth slot with 13 points.

The next round of the Ranji Trophy will begin on 23 January 2025, after finishing the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy white-ball tournaments.

Brief Scores:

In Delhi: Services 240 and 182 all out lost to Mumbai 288 all out and 137 for 1 in 35.4 overs (Lad 73 not out, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 55 not out) by 9 wickets.

Mumbai: 6 points; Services: 0. *—PTI*

Impressive India stuns China 3-0 to book semis

RAJGIR , 16 NOV

The win against world No. 6 China was India's fourth consecutive win *PHOTO: PTI*

Defending champions India stunned Olympic silver medallist China 3-0 to seal a semifinal spot at the women's Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament here on Saturday.

India scored two field goals through Sangita Kumari (32nd minute) and skipper Salima Tete (37th) before the tournament's highest scorer Deepika (60th) converted a penalty corner in the final minute.

The win against world No. 6 China was India's fourth consecutive win in the tournament. The hosts are now on top of the standings with eight points from four games.China has dropped to second place with six points from four matches.India will square off their round-robin campaign against Japan on Sunday.The top four teams from the six-team continental tournament will qualify for the semifinals.

India was the offensive from the word go and created most of the opportunities without any success as the Chinese defended deep into their own territory and relied on counterattacks.

India secured their first real chance in the opening minute of the game in the form of back-to-back penalty corners but wasted both opportunities. Minutes later, Sharmila Devi essayed a precision pass to Sunelita Toppo, whose first touch opened up the Chinese defence, giving Deepika a one-on-one situation with the opposition goalkeeper, who came out on top to deny the Indian forward.

China also secured a penalty corner in the first quarter but the Indian defence stood tall. Both the sides were cagey in the first quarter with India making some silly mistakes after a bright start.India secured their second penalty corner in the 21st minute but to no avail. *—PTI*

AFRICA CUP

Ghana fails to qualify for first time since 2004

LONDON, 16 NOV

Ghana, a four-time Africa Cup champion, has played in 24 editions of the tournament *PHOTO: X / THE ATHLETIC*

Ghana failed to reach the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time since 2004 after drawing with Angola 1-1 in qualifying on Friday.

The Black Stars needed a win in their penultimate group game to keep alive their slim hopes of qualifying for the tournament in Morocco next year.

Ghana, a four-time Africa Cup champion, has played in 24 editions of the tournament. Only seven-time champion Egypt (26) and defending champion Ivory Coast (25) have appeared in more.

Already-qualified Angola made the better start in front of the home fans in Talatona, but Ghana veteran Jordan Ayew opened the scoring for the visitors with a brilliant free kick from distance in the 18th minute.

Ghana remained bottom of qualifying Group F with just three points from five games. It needed two wins from its final two games while hoping group rival Sudan (seven points) lost both of its games.

Niger had earlier done the Black Stars a favor by beating Sudan 4-0. Ghana next plays Niger (four points) on Monday, when Niger can qualify as group runner-up behind Angola (13 points) as long as Angola beats Sudan in their final group game. Niger has a better goal difference than Sudan. *—PTI*

Ruud sinks Rublev to reach Nitto ATP Finals SFs

TURIN, 16 NOV

Casper Ruud sealed his spot in the semi-finals at the Nitto ATP Finals for the third time on Friday night in Turin, where he overcame Andrey Rublev 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 to end the World No. 9's progression hopes.

Ruud needed just a set to join the John Newcombe group winner Alexander Zverev in the semi-finals but ensured he would finish the round-robin stage with a 2-1 record after producing a high-class third-set performance against Rublev.

Casper Ruud

Ruud arrived in Turin having lost his past four matches but has looked close to his best this week, also defeating Carlos Alcaraz."Tennis is interesting sometimes. I don't know what I am doing better this week than the past few weeks but the only thing is serving, I am serving well," Ruud said after reaching the semis. "It is tough to play the best players in the world but nice because you feel you are an underdog and can play free and you know if you don't bring your A-plus level you will likely lose." *—AP*